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THE MAKERS OF CANADA

VOL. VIII

Alex Mackenzie

THE MAKERS OF CANADA

MACKENZIE
SELKIRK
SIMPSON

BY

THE REV. GEORGE BRYCE, D.D.

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SIR ALEXANDER MACKENZIE

CHAPTER I

STRUGGLE OF THE FUR COMPANIES

"I SING arms and the hero," the words used by Virgil to introduce his great story of valour and heroism in the far Mediterranean may be as truly applied by us in beginning an account of deeds and men in the rise and struggles of frontier life in the far west of North America. The picturesque and heroic are not confined to any age or clime; indeed, they are characteristic in a peculiar degree of the early days of occupation of the American continent. The conflict of the two great fur companies, which carried on a trade covering the vast expanse of British North America, stretching from the Atlantic to the Pacific Oceans, brings before us operations extending over distances before which Cæsar's invasions or even Alexander's great marches shrink into insignificance.

The now venerable Hudson's Bay Company, which we recognize to-day as having a history of two and a quarter centuries, had spent the first century of its rule satisfied with its place of pre-eminence on the shores of Hudson Bay, had declared several enormous dividends, and had begun to consider its right prescriptive to the trade brought by the Indians down the rivers, even from the

Rocky Mountains, two thousand miles to the west. It was a beautiful thing to see the fealty with which the northern Indians, the Crees and Chipewyans, and the Eskimos as well, regarded the English traders, and brought to them at York Factory and Fort Churchill the marten, fox and beaver skins caught, by their shrewdness and ceaseless energy, on the rivers and in the forests of the vast interior. The taking of French Canada by the English relieved the company for one or two decades from any show of competition which may have affected them on their southern border during the French régime.

But as Canada began to receive adventurous spirits from Scotland, England, and the American colonies, it became evident to the traders of Hudson Bay that new opponents not to be despised would have to be met and dealt with. The Scottish merchants of Montreal, many of whom had the blood and spirit of the Highland clans that had fought at Culloden, and Englishmen, who had braved the hardships of the American frontier and had come to Canada to try their fortunes, looked towards the fur country as a new field for adventure and profit. Men of this class are proverbially men of daring and of self-confidence. In frequent contact with the Indians, encountering the big game of the woods, crossing deep rivers, and running dangerous rapids, accustomed, in short, to all the hardships of the border country, the frontiersman is full of spirit and resource.

Accordingly, a few years after the conquest, Curry, Finlay, Henry, sen., and many others whose names are well known, started from Montreal with their companies of Indians and French-Canadians, and, going up the Ottawa River and Great Lakes, fixed their eyes on the star of hope in the far north. Vérendrye, a French explorer, had led the way inland from Lake Superior, thirty or forty years before, though he and his followers had never gone north of the Saskatchewan. The merchants of Montreal thought nothing of penetrating farther to the north; so, leaving the Saskatchewan behind, they planned a flank movement on the Hudson's Bay Company, which would completely cut off from them the great bodies of Indians who came down the English River or the Saskatchewan to the forts on Hudson Bay.

True, a few years before this plan was undertaken, the Hudson's Bay Company, no doubt preparing to gird itself for the fray, had sent an ardent explorer, Samuel Hearne, afterwards known as the "'Mungo Park' of Canada," to explore the interior, conciliate the Indians, and ascertain the possibility of increasing trade. After two absolute failures, Hearne gained, on his third journey from Hudson Bay, Lake Athapapuskow, probably Great Slave Lake; and, going north-eastward, he discovered the Copper Mine River, and reached the shore of the Arctic Sea. This was a worthy achievement, and it was three years after this that

Thomas and Joseph Frobisher, two merchants from Montreal, in furtherance of the plan spoken of, built (1772) a fur trader's fort at Sturgeon Lake on the Saskatchewan River, where the northern lakes and watercourses make a connection with the Churchill or English River, which runs down to Hudson Bay.

This was a strategic point of first importance. North, east, and west it commanded the approaches; and it was a stroke of genius when the brothers Frobisher erected their simple log fort at this point, and prepared to wage a war worthy of the giants. Hearne and his colleagues at Fort Churchill were not long in hearing of the intruders and their plans; in fact, friendly Indians in a single season blazed the news on the very shore of Hudson Bay. Hearne lost no time in taking up the gage of battle thrown to him by the Frobishers. Going to Pine Island Lake, the western arm of the Sturgeon, within five hundred yards of the fort built by the Montrealers, he began (1774) the erection of Fort Cumberland, a trading-post well known to the present day.

It was a fateful year when first two forts, the embodiment of rival interests, stood face to face, a few hundred yards apart, on the Saskatchewan River, the great artery of Rupert's Land. Then and there was begun a conflict which for well-nigh half a century stirred the passions of violent and headstrong men, urged to its height one of the most celebrated competitions of modern times, intro-

duced the fire-water—the curse of the poor Indian —as a means of advancing trade, and dyed with the blood of some of the best men of both companies the snows of Athabaska, the banks of the Saskatchewan, the rocky shores of Lake Superior, and the fertile soil of the prairies on the Red River of the North.

At the very time when the thirteen English colonies on the Atlantic shore were precipitating a fratricidal conflict, in which families were divided, neighbours alienated, and English-speaking colonists separated into hostile camps, in the far north a company of Englishmen from Hudson Bay were turning their weapons against Englishmen in Canada, both speaking the same tongue, respecting the same laws, and flying the same flag.

Seventeen hundred and seventy-four and its succeeding years thus presented the sad spectacle of Anglo-Saxon interests, both in the Atlantic colonies and in Rupert's Land, in a state of fiercest conflict and division, from the tropics to the Arctic circle, from the Gulf of Mexico to the icy sea.

The Hudson's Bay Company had been averse to entering on a conflict which promised to be so severe and destructive of successful trade, but the Montreal traders were aggressive. Frobisher's men had penetrated to Lake Athabaska and built forts in the surrounding region. But the English company, with enormous energy, pushed forward its plans and built its forts. It took hold of the Assiniboine and Red River country, and built famous forts, such

as Brandon House, Edmonton House, Carlton House, and trading-posts at the mouth of Winnipeg River, on Rainy Lake, and even in the country now included in Minnesota. The great distance of these trading-houses from each other well shows how thoroughly the Hudson's Bay Company had covered the country, for each of these centres carried with it a number of subordinate posts.

The Montreal traders were no less energetic. In fact, though the Hudson's Bay Company had a higher reputation with the Indians, and though the English company could reach the interior earlier in the spring, yet the dash and spirit and acquaintance with the country of the Canadian traders made them, in organization and trading ability, more than a match for their rivals. Finding the need of strengthening themselves, the several firms of merchants who were trading from Montreal agreed to unite in 1783-4. The prospect of peace and coöperation was, however, immediately destroyed by some of the selfish and unworthy elements of the new company breaking away from it, and with the help of other Montreal merchants organizing an opposition.

Four years afterwards a cruel murder was perpetrated in the Saskatchewan region, by Pond, the marplot who had divided the company, and so great was the fear and confusion caused by this act that the three Montreal companies effected a union in 1787 into one North-West Company. New posts and a great impulse to trade resulted from this union.

The trade, which at the time of union amounted to £40,000, by the end of the century had increased to three times that sum. The last quarter of the eighteenth century thus saw the English and the Canadian fur companies, side by side, occupying the vast interior of Rupert's Land, and even crossing the Rocky Mountains in search of trade.

Into the Canadian company, among the young Scotsmen who were attracted to Canada by the fur trade, entered a young Highland adventurer, Alexander Mackenzie by name. He at once rose to prominence, and became a determined and perhaps rather aggressive and irreconcilable element among the Nor'-Westers in the Protean phases of their exciting history. The nineteenth century had just dawned as Alexander Mackenzie published in London an account of his great discovery. The book had ardent readers in Great Britain. One of these was a young Scottish nobleman, Thomas, Earl of Selkirk, who had a lofty imagination and a high public spirit. The book of travels excited in the young peer the spirit of adventure, and led to his embarking on a great scheme of emigration. In a few years, to further his emigration plans, Lord Selkirk gained a controlling interest in the Hudson's Bay Company, being opposed in this by Alexander Mackenzie, who held a quantity of stock in the English company.[1] Lord Selkirk organized his

[1] The second part of this book narrates in detail the circumstances connected with Lord Selkirk's great project.

colony under the auspices of the Hudson's Bay Company, though opposed by Mackenzie and others of the Nor'-Westers. But, as we shall presently learn, colonizer and fur trader could not at all agree. Their aims, methods, and interests were not to be reconciled, and blood ran plentifully on the bleak plains of Rupert's Land to the disgrace of both parties, who claimed the shelter of the British flag.

The imperial and Canadian authorities were both compelled to interfere. Lord Selkirk, wearied and harassed by conflicts, lawsuits, and misunderstandings, returned home to die. With sympathetic interest in this conflict from the other side, Alexander Mackenzie, far away in Britain, spent his declining years, until, in the same year, (1820) the opposing leaders passed away.

The following year saw more peaceable counsels prevail, and the two companies united under the name of the older organization as the Hudson's Bay Company. Just as the union was effected a new force appeared in the trader's clerk, George Simpson, who, as governor, was destined to unite the discordant elements, and in a career of nearly forty years to raise the united companies to a position of greatest influence.

We ask the patient attention of our readers, as with some detail we set forth the life, work, and influence of these three representatives of the great fur companies, viz., Sir Alexander Mackenzie, the Earl of Selkirk, and Sir George Simpson.

CHAPTER II

THE YOUNG TRADER

WHY so many Scottish men of education, spirit, and daring found their way, after the conquest, to Canada, and especially to Montreal, is somewhat difficult to ascertain. Scotland is a rugged country, with a climate fitted to make a hardy race; it is very far from being a fertile country in the main; a large portion of its people—larger than at the present time—were mountaineers, loving adventure and accustomed to the hardships of the heath and wood. It is thus possible that young and adventurous Scotsmen found in Canada a home in a northland, suited to their thought and liking.

Highland soldiers had clambered up the heights of Quebec, and the land seemed theirs by right of conquest. Some of the soldiers remained in Canada along the great St. Lawrence, while those who returned to their native valleys, as they told the tale of daring on the Plains of Abraham, and made "Evan's, Donald's fame ring in each clansman's ears," inspired the young and ambitious to seek out the land of the hunt and fur trade, and make it theirs.

Among those of better parts and respectability there came to the New World Alexander Mackenzie.

According to the statement of his own family, he was a native of Stornoway, in the island of Lewis on the west coast of Scotland, and not, as stated in the Encyclopædia Britannica, of Inverness. He is said to have been a scion of the old Mackenzies of Seaforth, from whom Stornoway, with the whole island, of which it is the capital, passed years ago to its present proprietors, the Mathesons, of Achany and Ardross. According to the Dictionary of National Biography, young Mackenzie was born in the year 1755, but his grandson writes to the author that his grandfather was born in 1763. The future explorer had received a fair education, and being familiar with the sea, and finding the boatman's life attractive, was well fitted for the work of the fur trade, towards which he was drawn on his arrival in Montreal at the age of sixteen.

In 1779, on his arrival in Canada, the leaders of the fur trade were Simon McTavish and the brothers Frobisher. The two companies under these leaders represented the greater part of the capital and influence of the fur trade. There were, however, restless spirits among the traders who did not acknowledge the prevailing domination. Two Americans, Peter Pond and Peter Pangman, the latter known as *Bastonnais* (i.e., the American), though possessed of little capital, were plotters of the first water. They succeeded in inducing the Montreal merchants, John Gregory, an Englishman, and Alexander Norman McLeod, a proud and aggressive High-

lander, to unite in company and fight the strong monopolists led by McTavish.

With this nest of oppositionists Alexander Mackenzie allied himself. His keenness and daring at once attracted the attention of his employers, and his selection, after a very short experience, to lead a trading expedition to Detroit, on the lower lakes, was a remarkable example of confidence. It was no easy thing to conduct a trading party from Montreal to Detroit in those early days. The rapids of the St. Lawrence had to be faced and overcome, while the watercourses were the highways for the bands of Indians from the far west, who were rendered the more treacherous by the success of the American revolutionists.

Upper Canada, through which Mackenzie wended his way to the west, was still an uninhabited forest, for the United Empire Loyalist was only finding his way to his asylum of rest north of the lakes. Crossing the Niagara peninsula along the Niagara River, or leaving Lake Ontario at Fond du Lac, where the city of Hamilton now stands, portaging to the Grand River, and descending it to Lake Erie, the adventurous *voyageurs* then coasted the shallow lake and found their way to Detroit, their destination.

Detroit had been a favourite resort of the traders under the old French régime. It is said that at the time of the conquest there were some two thousand French-Canadians or their descendants living on the banks of the Detroit River. Some have questioned

this statement inasmuch as within twenty-five years from that date, when young Mackenzie betook himself to Detroit, there were only seventy of these old French families. Either the former statement was incorrect, or else the migration of these borderers farther west to Michilimackinac and the shores of Lake Michigan had been very large. The latter is the more likely explanation.

The counting-house experience of five years in Montreal, and a year's responsibility at Detroit fitted the young Scottish trader for undertaking what was the joy of every Nor'-Wester, the journey to the far North-West. Mackenzie was visited at Detroit by McLeod, the junior member of his house, and induced to leave quieter scenes behind and adventure himself in a land yet largely unknown to him.

Now raised to the dignity of a *bourgeois*,[1] (1785) Mackenzie set out for the land that was to make him famous. Passing Mackinaw and Sault Ste. Marie, the new leader entered the great Lake Superior, and coasting its northern shore, reached Grand Portage, of which he speaks with some interest.

Grand Portage was the cynosure of every fur trader, whether he were coming from the interior to the stormy Lake Superior, or going westward through the upper lakes. To the imagination of the young fur trader Grand Portage made a strong

[1] A partner or shareholder in the company.

appeal, just as it does even now to those acquainted with the old days of the fur trade.

It lies on a most unfrequented part of the north shore of Lake Superior, some forty miles south-west of Fort William, of which it was the predecessor. A few years ago the writer paid the lonely spot a visit. After being rowed in a small boat by the keeper of a neighbouring lighthouse, in a dismal and dangerous night voyage, he reached this famous rendezvous of the old traders. The name of the place was taken from a nine-mile portage to avoid the rapids of the Pigeon River. Over the portage a wagon road was constructed, which may still be seen. A few sunken timbers only are left in the water to represent the warehouses and wharves of this once thronged and important place. These formerly faced a pretty bay made by a rocky islet standing out into the lake as a protection and shelter to it. On this island is now the dwelling of a solitary French fisherman, looking like a robber's keep. Besides the fisherman there is not a white man to be found for twenty miles. An Indian village occupies the site of Grand Portage. The village has a multitude of dogs, but neither wagon nor horse is known to be within many miles. Grand Portage was found, after the Treaty of Paris, to be on the American side of the Pigeon River, but was not given up for nearly twenty years after Mackenzie's first visit.

When Alexander Mackenzie arrived at Grand

Portage it was in its glory. Five hundred men in the employ of the fur traders assembled there, those from the east who met no Indians lived on cured rations, and were called *mangeurs de lard*, or pork-eaters; while the independent westerners were known as *coureurs de bois* or wood-runners. Into this stronghold of the old company Mackenzie and his associates had now come, representing the Gregory interests, and with the fixed determination of winning a foothold in the heart of the great fur country which extended far to the north and west.

The vigorous, if not violent, member of the company, A. N. McLeod, remained in Montreal to manage the headquarters. The members of the determined little band divided up the great territory among them. The Red River district was apportioned to Duncan Pollock, a veteran trader, the far-off Athabaska was given to John Ross, the rich Saskatchewan to *Bastonnais* Pangman, and the Churchill or English River to the young *bourgeois*, Alexander Mackenzie, who already showed evidences of a dominancy and influence by and by to become supreme. With the younger company were also associated James Finlay, son of the pioneer trader to the fur country, and Alexander Mackenzie's cousin, Roderick McKenzie, who became a well-known trader, and was the historiographer of the fur traders.

The practical talent and influence of the Mackenzies showed itself in the new organization. They

laid it down as a principle that the best results from the fur trade were not to be gained by the two companies, even though they were rivals, being in a state of friction and conflict. Accordingly Alexander Mackenzie and his neighbouring *bourgeois* of the other company, P. Small, completed their successful winter's work by carrying their furs in company to Ile à la Crosse, making the river banks resound with their joyous songs. Roderick McKenzie had as his rival in the English River district one of the greatest men of the old company, William McGillivray, and they, too, after a good winter's trade carried in company their superabundant catches to the place of rendezvous.

Unfortunately this harmony did not prevail everywhere. Trader Ross had found as his rival Peter Pond, who had basely deserted Pangman, and returned to his old masters. Pond was a man of enormous energy. He had been the pioneer of the Athabaska district, but while the successful upholder of his own company, he was the terror of his rivals and the scourge of the peace-loving Indians of the Athabaska district. Five years before this time the desperate trader had, it was believed, been the cause of the death in the Athabaska country of a popular Swiss trader, M. Wadin, the agent of a rival company, and now Ross found a constant irritation being kept up between Pond's subordinates and his own. During the whole winter matters went from bad to worse, until in one of the actual

quarrels of the two parties, Ross was unfortunately killed.

The brigades of the year, led by Alexander Mackenzie and others, had just left Ile à la Crosse to carry their cargoes to Grand Portage, when the sad news of the death of John Ross reached Roderick McKenzie, who had been left in charge of Ile à la Crosse, in the absence of the party *en route* for Lake Superior. McKenzie considered that the matter of Pond's violence, since it was the second occasion on which he had been charged with murder, was so serious that it was absolutely necessary that the partners at Grand Portage should know of it. Accordingly, in a light canoe manned by five *voyageurs*, he hastened unguided to the rendezvous and made the painful journey in a month's time.

The news of the bloodshed in Athabaska filled the minds of the members of both companies in Grand Portage with dismay. All felt the words of the wise man to be true, that the "beginning of strife is as when one letteth out water," and this being Pond's second offence no one knew to what it might grow, especially in the remote Indian territories. The matter was fully debated and canvassed among the traders, and it was decided that the union of the two companies was imperative. Accordingly the North-West Company was established (1787) with a larger membership, and the three firms, headed by McTavish, Frobisher, and Gregory respectively, became the agents for the joint ad-

ministration of affairs at Grand Portage and Montreal.

All eyes were turned upon the rising young trader, Alexander Mackenzie, as the man to meet the emergency in Athabaska. He alone was fitted "to bell the cat." While he was, under the united company, to act ostensibly in concert with the bloodthirsty Pond, yet the understanding was that he should take the supervision, as Pond's extravagant ideas had lost for him the confidence of the traders. Masson states that Mackenzie on going to the Athabaska district, had determined to follow the course of the Hudson's Bay Company, viz., to withdraw all posts from beyond Lake Athabaska, and compel the northern Indians to trade within the precincts of a well-organized fort built upon the lake. His fear of the influence of the Hudson's Bay Company, however, led him, on fuller consideration, to change his plans, and to push out agents even farther to the north than had yet been done.

In his administration of this northern district Alexander Mackenzie at once showed his surpassing ability. His surrender of preconceived opinion, and his adoption of the policy of expansion, showed him to be a man of observation and decision. The fact that he was a very young man was all in his favour in his new work. At twenty-four he had the energy of maturity and the adventurous instincts of youth. In a service such as that of the fur companies in a new country, overcaution, prejudice,

and slavery to routine are deadly sins. When Simpson, a young man who had only spent a winter in the country, was chosen as governor of Rupert's Land, he succeeded because he had ability and had nothing to unlearn; so young Alexander Mackenzie proved his adaptability and his fitness for leadership.

Another mark of his foresight and good judgment was revealed in his selection of the localities which should serve as centres for future expansion. Thus early the thought of the explorer was directed to the two oceans, one to the north and the other to the west, as opening up a field for the largest speculation and enterprise.

Having decided to adopt the new policy of "advance," he selected Leroux and his party, who had been brought from Great Slave Lake, to return thither and to push the trade with vigour. Leroux not only did this, taking up a post on Great Slave Lake, but, finding the Indians indolent and careless about trade, he despatched a well-known Chipewyan leader known as the "English chief," to induce the northern Indians to come to his fort with their furs. Leroux also sent a sturdy Highland trader named Sutherland to visit distant tribes of Indians and win their good-will by a liberal distribution of presents. The good news spread far among the solitudes of the remote region beyond, so that in the following spring a large number of Indians from a lake far to the west, hitherto unknown to the

traders, came to search out the lavish monarch of the north—Leroux. The policy, open spirit, and attractive manner of Mackenzie were all found reflected in the whole body of his subordinates.

Another stroke of genius, also looking to the future, was his choice of a commanding position on Peace River, the great waterway flowing to Lake Athabaska from the west, a position which dominated even the western slope of the Rocky Mountains. To this point he despatched Boyer to found a fort and open trade on the route to the western sea. This he did at a spot where the Little Red River, a tributary from the south, flows into the Peace River.

It was the custom of the trading companies to give positions of trust only to men of ripe years and experience. Seldom was a man known to be promoted to a commissioned office while under forty years of age. That Alexander Mackenzie should be placed in charge of so difficult and important a district as Athabaska was an unheard-of thing, but it simply showed that this man, so honoured at an early age, was destined to be one of the master minds of the fur trade, though it is well to state that his sudden elevation did not free him from the jealousy afterwards manifested by some of the traders.

CHAPTER III

FORT CHIPEWYAN

LAKE ATHABASKA, on account of its geographical position, was the key to the far north. Vast regions inhabited by the best of fur-bearing animals were, and are to the present day, tributary to it. As already stated, the violent Peter Pond had led the way to the district, although he had not taken possession of the lake itself. It was in 1778 that Pond built his post on Elk River, or, as the French called it, Rivière à la Biche, thirty miles south of Lake Athabaska. To this point Alexander Mackenzie had come, here his broad plans were laid for the extension of the fur trade, and here the brilliant designs were conceived that were to make him famous as an explorer.

Masson, in his book on the North-West Company, depicts in a striking manner the feelings of many of the more educated and enterprising fur traders, as they contemplated the monotony and humdrum of much of a fur trader's life. He represents Alexander Mackenzie as not entirely above the tedium which he sought to relieve by bursts of bustling activity. "How do you spend your time?" asked a young clerk of the North-West Company of a comrade of his own age, who, like himself, had received a good

education. "I rise with the sun; I go to see the traps; if a number of Indians arrive I buy their furs, then I eat *tollibee* (white fish) three times a day. Do you see? I find the time very long, and I fear that my constitution will be seriously injured by that kind of a life, but what can be done? I make a dog train; I bend some wood for snowshoes; and with perseverance I hope to learn the use of the crooked knife."

Such a life could not satisfy Alexander Mackenzie; his intelligent and open nature revolted from the idea of passing the best years of his life in such intellectual stagnation: now some dirty savages to receive; some goods to exchange for furs; some *voyageurs* to despatch to the interior; these for companions, men without education and sometimes of bad character! Ennui, the worst of maladies, consumed him; he felt himself degraded and useless. His ambition demanded a wider horizon, and for his energy wider fields, and the work of seeking new regions; in short, the desire to travel and explore was burning within him, and he resolved to do his share towards the discovery of the famous north-west passage, if it existed, and to reach the Arctic Ocean.

Various reasons, however, led to his considering the plan very fully, before he decided upon it. There was, as already stated, a considerable amount of jealousy among the traders. Mackenzie had belonged to the smaller company, he was unpopular with

Le marquis, as the great McTavish, the head of the traders in Montreal, was called, and he knew that it would be almost impossible for him to get a commission to explore the far distant north, and to incur the expense and danger of such a voyage—even should he offer himself at the annual meeting of the partners at Grand Portage.

Another difficulty lay in his way. The district to which he was appointed had by the conduct of Pond become unsettled, and there was no one of his subordinates to whom he could entrust the direction of affairs. The first obstacle would be largely removed if the second were solved. Accordingly the thought came to his mind to secure as his lieutenant in the district his cousin, Roderick McKenzie, who was not well satisfied with his position in the trade, and was seriously thinking of leaving the fur country altogether, and returning to Montreal.

The vision of expansion placed before Roderick McKenzie by his cousin proved an attractive one, so that he decided to remain in the country, and soon found his way to the Athabaska district. A strong friendship was thus developed between the two cousins, though, as we shall see, to be interrupted for a time in subsequent years by the changes in the fur companies. The work entrusted to Roderick McKenzie, and the way in which he did it, resulted in giving him a high place among the traders.

Arrived at Elk or Athabaska River, Alexander

Mackenzie and his confiding kinsman laid their plans for accomplishing what they had in view. The post was thirty miles from Lake Athabaska, or Lake of the Hills, as it was also called. Alexander Mackenzie addressed himself to putting the trade of his district in thorough order, and kept his hold of Elk River post, the old centre, but Roderick was sent to take up new ground and build a new headquarters.

To Alexander Mackenzie's keen eye it was plain that Lake Athabaska would be a more central point from which to send out his messages to the traders, and to which they could come conveniently with their furs. It would afford a line of immediate communication with the vast lake and river system of what we now know as Great Slave and Great Bear Lakes and the Mackenzie River, and it would also lead the way to passages through the Rocky Mountains, where lay great regions still to be explored.

Roderick McKenzie has left us in his interesting "Reminiscences" the story of how he took up his position on Lake Athabaska, and pushed forward the work entrusted to him. "After making every possible inquiry and taking every necessary precaution," says the enterprising novice, "I pitched upon a conspicuous projection which advanced about a league into the lake, the base of which appeared in the shape of a person sitting with arms extended, the palms forming, as it were, a point. On this we settled and built a fort, which we called Chipewyan. It is

altogether a beautiful, healthy situation, in the centre of many excellent and never-failing fisheries, provided they are duly attended to at the proper season."

The matter of food is ever an important one in these far northern regions, where nature is not profuse in her gifts, so that the proximity of good fishing-grounds was an important consideration for the hungry traders.

The first Fort Chipewyan was built on a promontory on the south side of Lake Athabaska, a few miles east of the entrance of the Elk River into the lake. It was regarded as a great triumph of skill when this farthest great outpost of the fur trade was completed. Its commanding position and its commodious and comfortable appointments were a surprise to the Indians and old *voyageurs* who frequented the region. Roderick McKenzie had an eye for the æsthetic, so he fitted out his new fort with every luxury possible in those remote and barren regions. His painting of the interior of the new post, and his attention to its comforts were something unheard of in such a region. The new fort was at once accepted, by Indians and traders alike, as the natural centre of trade, and was at times spoken of as the "Emporium of the North."

Roderick McKenzie always had a taste for literature, as was seen years later when he opened correspondence with traders all over the north and west, asking for descriptions of scenery, of adven-

ture, folklore and history. On his building Fort Chipewyan we learn that he also had in view the founding of a library at the fort, which would not be only for the immediate residents of Fort Chipewyan, but for traders and clerks of the whole region tributary to Lake Athabaska, so that it would be what he called, in an imaginative and somewhat jocular vein, "the little Athens of the Arctic regions." This library became, perhaps, the most famous in the whole extent of Rupert's Land, and more than fifty years afterwards we read of Lieutenant Henry Lefroy, on his expedition for magnetic observation, spending the winter in Fort Chipewyan, and revelling in the treasures of its well-selected library; therefore the library was not entirely, as Masson contends, scattered and destroyed in the first generation after its founding. The establishment of a library in the far north, and other similar incidents, are evidences of the intelligence and even culture found in the posts of the fur traders from the time of Mackenzie to the present. Elsewhere the writer has amplified the matter, and with slight modification said: That the officers of the fur companies were not traders only is made abundantly evident. In one of his letters Governor Simpson (1833) states that their great countryman, Sir Walter Scott has just passed away; he thanks one of his traders for sending him copies of *Blackwood's Magazine*; and orders are often given for fresh and timely books. A little earlier we find the minute interest which the fur traders took in public

events in a letter from Chief Factor John Stuart, after whom Stuart's Lake in New Caledonia was named. Stuart speaks to another fur trader of the continuation of Southey's "History of the War of the Peninsula" not being published, and we know from other sources that this history fell still-born, but Stuart goes on to say that he had sent for Colonel Napier's "History of the Peninsular War." "Napier's politics," says Stuart, "are different, and we shall see whether it is the radical or a laurel [Southey was poet laureate] that deserves the palm." These examples illustrate what all close observers notice, that the officers of the fur companies not only read to purpose, but maintained a keen outlook for the good, even for the most finished contemporary literature.

Here, then, the winter of 1788-9 was spent in the new fort by Roderick McKenzie. Even a view of the map can hardly make vivid to us the great distance to the far north that Fort Chipewyan is. From Montreal to Grand Portage took the *mangeurs de lard* many days. After the *coureurs de bois* left Grand Portage with song and flags and mirth, time fled quickly until the outlet to Rainy Lake was reached, which was a stopping-place for the western expeditions. On August 1st the canoes, manned with sturdy French-Canadians or Indians, left Rainy Lake for the far north. As the season was fast passing the canoemen worked with might and main in order to reach their destination. It was the

end of September before the *voyageurs* and their well-laden canoes reached Athabaska.

About this time of the year the traders from the far north of Lake Athabaska, and the Indians of remote Arctic regions reached Fort Chipewyan, and the whole lake was alive with canoes, urged forward by Indian men and women coming to the trader, whom they regarded as the mightiest of men.

This trading season over, the early winter came in October, when officers and men had little to do but sort their furs, and secure food for subsistence, filling in the intervals of their time with the interests of the library of which we have spoken. Roderick McKenzie, writing of the winter at his new fort, says: "These men and myself, I recollect, visited six nets three times a day from under the ice during that fall fishery, but no mittens can be used during that serious operation. The fingers and wrists while occupied in managing the nets and disentangling the fish from the meshes, must be kept constantly immerged to prevent their freezing. I had a number of *voyageurs* in charge; they were divided into crews independent of each other and in different houses, each having to provide itself at the fisheries."

Whether it was trading with the greasy Indians from the north, in their poverty and misery, or hastening up and down the waterways in summer, or living almost entirely on the fish which were caught with such difficulty and hardship, it is plain that life at Fort Chipewyan represented, under the

most favourable circumstances, the embodiment of all that was inhospitable, uninteresting, and laborious. And yet we are told that Athabaska and the Mackenzie River were the greatest desire of the hardy traders.

CHAPTER IV

A DASH TO THE ARCTIC SEA

THE dream cherished by Alexander Mackenzie, that he should find a new way to the Arctic Ocean, was not a mere vain ambition. Nearly twenty years before, Samuel Hearne, the explorer of the English company from Hudson Bay, had succeeded in reaching the Arctic Ocean by way of Lake Athapapuskow, and thence north-eastward along the Copper Mine River to the frozen sea.

Hearne's exploration, whether looked at from the point of view of the enormous distance, the fact that it was accomplished after two previous failures, the lack of experience and scientific training of the man, or the bravery of the explorer, had been a marvel. True, he had made a mistake in placing the mouth of the Copper Mine River nearly four degrees farther north than it should have been, but he had succeeded in his most hazardous attempt.

As the representative of a rival company, and as he believed, of a more energetic company, Alexander Mackenzie heard with nervous interest from the tales of the Indians who visited Fort Chipewyan of a vast river rivalling the Saskatchewan or the Churchill, and on which the white man had never set eyes.

Roderick McKenzie had now gained command

of the details of management, and his adventurous cousin felt that he might at length strike to the north and add his name to the list of great national explorers—perhaps to be the discover of the north-west passage sought for so ardently by his predecessors. All things being well prepared Alexander Mackenzie started on his voyage. We have his own account of the memorable journey to which we shall refer. Never did a recital of exploits begin in so modest and even commonplace a way as this :—

Journal of a Voyage, &c.

June, 1789. Wednesday, 3. "We embarked at nine in the morning at Fort Chipewyan, on the south side of the Lake of the Hills . . . . in a canoe made of birch-bark."

To make a successful voyage in the wilds of the far north the great requisite is a reliable crew and a good band of followers. Hearne had found this out. Mackenzie himself knew it well from his half-dozen years of western exploration and trade. He had secured a guide, the "English chief," who was a true successor of Matonnabee, Hearne's famous guide. The "English chief" had often made the journey from Lake Athabaska to Hudson Bay to trade with the English company, and had thus gained his name. With his two wives and two young Indians in one canoe, and his followers and slaves to act as interpreters and food providers in another, the chief accompanied the "Kitche Okema"—Mackenzie.

Mackenzie led the way in his own canoe, accom-

panied by four French-Canadians, two of them having their wives, and a steady young German named John Steinbruck. His four Canadians deserve mention. They were François Barrieau, Charles Ducette, Joseph Landry, and Pierre De Lorme.

Leroux had before, as we have seen, penetrated the northern route to Great Slave Lake, and now he was at Fort Chipewyan to assist the explorer in his great departure for the north. Leroux was taking merchandize with him to trade in Slave Lake, but the other canoes being overloaded, Mackenzie required him to take clothing and merchandize to serve the advance party when they should leave Slave Lake behind, and push forward into the great unknown.

All being ready the brigade started on its way on June 3rd, 1789, crossed Lake Athabaska, twenty miles wide, to a river that led out of the lake, and for seven miles further the party pushed on, interrupted by the hunters stopping to shoot a wild goose and a couple of ducks. Camp was soon made and the journey was well begun on the first day. The next day they followed the tortuous stream to every point of the compass, until, after a ten miles' spurt, the branch joined Peace River, the vast stream coming from the west.

Some confusion is caused by travellers stating that the Peace River empties into Lake Athabaska, and by others declaring that Lake Athabaska flows towards Peace River. Both are correct. During high

water the channel followed by Mackenzie runs from the river into the lake, but at other times, as in this first voyage, the lake flows into the river.

The Peace River, which rises to the west of the Rocky Mountains and flows through them, is, at the point where Mackenzie reached it, a mighty stream, a mile broad. Indeed, from this point of junction the river changes its name, and flowing northwards to Great Slave Lake, is known as Slave River.

After reaching Slave River the party hurried forward, making twenty-four and a half miles, and then enjoyed the excitement of running the upper rapids. Camp was not struck until they had made thirty-six and a half miles more, thus accomplishing seventy-one miles as their day's work. The camp was at the junction of the Dog and Slave Rivers and just above the second rapids of the Slave River.

The next day was one of difficulty. Two rapids required the unloading of the goods at the Décharge, as the road around the rapids is called; the load only is taken over the carrying-place, and the canoes are floated light down the rapids. Twelve painful miles followed, in which there were the three dangerous portages called D'Embarras, Mountain, and Pelican, besides one or two smaller carrying-places, and other dangerous rapids. From this part of the river onward are fierce rapids, boiling caldrons, and whirling eddies. Some twenty-one miles brought needed rest to men and Indians. The watchful hunters had provided themselves on

the way with a fine quarry of geese, ducks, and beavers.

The fourth day out the party pushed on with marvellous energy, under Mackenzie's fierce driving, making seventy-two miles, and were only prevented from doing as great things on the following day by cold winds and pelting rain, after they had gone about forty-four miles. Another day in camp was lost by this storm, and on June 9th an early start brought them to Great Slave Lake at nine o'clock in the morning, after a short but rather difficult run of fifteen miles.

This journey over fierce rapids, driftwood eddies, and rocky portages, in the face of strong headwinds, and with stoppages to provide food, over a distance of two hundred and seventy-two miles in less than a week, shows the remarkable power of inspiration that Alexander Mackenzie had, and is a tribute as well to the strength, skill, and hardihood of his chosen band of French-Canadians and Indians.

Great Slave Lake now presented a dismal sight to the impetuous *voyageurs*. A biting wind blew towards them, but at least they were free from the troublesome mosquitoes, which had been their constant attendants down the river. Mackenzie now began to realize that he was approaching the Arctic regions. Trees grew on the banks of the streams in a yellow clay mixed with gravel, though in low levels there was a rich black soil. Although it was the middle of June the ground was not thawed

more than fourteen inches deep, and the shore of the lake had not a spot of green upon it. The explorer heard from the Indians that near by were wide plains frequented by herds of buffalo, and that moose and reindeer were found in the woods. Many beavers built their houses on the smaller lakes and rivers. Swans, geese, and ducks appeared in vast numbers. It was near this spot, now reached by the explorer at Great Slave Lake, that Leroux and his party had three years before built their houses.

For twelve days the party moved along the shore of the lake, now avoiding the floating ice, now protecting themselves from the copious rains, and always seeking by a northward trend to gain the outlet, which was to lead them on their journey to the north.

Before leaving the lake Mackenzie met the Yellow Knife Indians who came with their peltries to trade with Leroux. After the bartering was over the explorer addressed the assembled savages and informed them of his intended visit to the north, that his traders would remain at this spot until their friends and relatives came to trade, and that, if the trade should be important enough, he would build a fort upon the lake. They promised, in return, great things, and sought the protection of the "Kitche Okema" from the Chipewyans, who, they declared, tyrannized over them.

All needed supplies having been transferred from Leroux' canoes to his own, on June 25th Mackenzie

started for his northern voyage, amid volleys from the small arms of the traders, who were being left behind. With parting admonitions to send his communications back to Roderick McKenzie at Fort Chipewyan the explorer paddled cheerfully off to the northern solitudes. For no less than four days the party moved hither and thither, under the leadership of a Yellow Knife guide, seeking for the river that was to lead them to the north. Well-nigh discouraged, they at length succeeded, by going round the long point of an island, in finding the looked-for channel on the south-west of Great Slave Lake. Passing a shallow some ten miles wide, going gradually westward, the party reached the river, where the width was narrowed to half a mile, and where the current became stronger. By the last day of the month they were running westward, with the Horn Mountains in sight on their left, extending from east to west.

On July 1st the brigade was fairly under weigh, though the frequent rains and clouds of mosquitoes made their journey most uncomfortable. After travelling for four days the scenery of the country completely changed, and they were among Indians, who were very wary and inaccessible. It was only after the "English chief" had succeeded in reaching these shy natives that they consented to meet Mackenzie, and they came to him with much trepidation.

Mackenzie's own account of their meeting is

graphic: "There were five families, consisting of twenty-five or thirty persons, and of two different tribes, the Slave and Dog-Rib Indians. We made them smoke, though it was evident they did not know the use of tobacco; we likewise supplied them with grog; but I am disposed to think that they accepted our civilities rather from fear than inclination. We acquired a more effectual influence over them by the distribution of knives, beads, awls, rings, gartering, fire-steels, flints, and hatchets, so that they became more familiar even than we expected, for we could not keep them out of our tents, though I did not observe that they attempted to purloin anything."

Mackenzie states that they told him fabulous stories about the river, which he was bound to explore. They were certain that it would take several winters for him to reach the sea, and that old age would overtake him and his followers before they could return. Horrid monsters and evil spirits they declared would have to be opposed and conquered, besides, two impassable falls barred the passage down the river. Though this information did not alarm the resolute leader, yet it carried consternation among his Indians, who firmly believed that as they went farther north the game would become scarcer.

Pushing on, however, day by day the party made remarkable progress, and on the fifth day of July they passed the mouth of the Great Bear River

which pours into the Mackenzie the sea-green coloured water of the great drainage area of Great Bear Lake—the largest lake in the fur traders' domain, containing, as it does, no less than fourteen thousand square miles.

On leaving the party of Dog-Rib Indians, Mackenzie had compelled one of the men of the tribe to accompany him as guide; he was now induced to let him return. His next guide was obtained from a second band of Indians they had met, known as the Hare Indians, but he was unwilling to go far. Another guide escaped after leading them a short distance.

As they proceeded northward the explorers met new races of Indians. Mackenzie describes them with much interest. On the tenth of the month he met a tribe called the Degutbee Dinées or the Quarrellers, who gave the pleasing information that the distance to the sea was not great. The explorer's attention was also attracted by a range of snowy mountains to the westward, which ran parallel to his course. He now found by observation that he had reached 67° 47′ north latitude. His latest guide tried to persuade him to go no further, being afraid of the Eskimos. Mackenzie, however, insisted on pressing forward, and took the middle channel, which contained a larger body of water. The party had evidently reached the delta of the great river which has since borne their leader's name. Landing on an island on Sunday, July 12th, Mac-

kenzie and the "English chief" ascended to the highest point, "from which," says the explorer in his matter-of-fact fashion, "we discovered the solid ice extending from the south-west by compass to the eastward." The hope was now high in the breasts of the whole party, especially in the French-Canadians, that they were about to reach the western sea, for which La Vérendrye and many other Nor'-Wester and Hudson's Bay Company leaders had sighed in vain. It was noticed that during the night the baggage in their encampment was being reached by the rising of the water.

On the fourteenth of the month Mackenzie gave orders to man the canoes, and then he forced his way in the face of a fierce wind that threatened to engulf his craft. Thus he sought to reach the sea. He landed at eight o'clock on a considerable island, which he called Whale Island, and in giving an account of this makes an important entry in his journal: "This morning I ordered a post to be erected close to our tents, on which I engraved the latitude [elsewhere stated by him to be 69° 7′] of the place, my own name, the number of persons which I had with me, and the time we remained there."

Early next morning it was found that the water had again risen and invaded their baggage, and they began to surmise that this was the rising of the ocean tide. The party were now within a short distance of the Arctic Sea, and were very anxious to reach that towards which they had so strenuously striven.

They found themselves a degree or two within the Arctic circle, and were amazed to see that they were in the land of the midnight sun. This being accomplished the commander was satisfied, and with peremptory haste started southward on his return voyage.

CHAPTER V

ASCENT OF THE GREAT RIVER

ALL readers of Mackenzie's journal experience great disappointment as they reach his account of his nearest approach to the Arctic Sea. The rise of the sea tide was surely a certain indication to him that he was near the ocean. The appearance of ice-fields, seen by him from the heights of the islands among which he passed, suggested to him the frozen surface of the Arctic Sea. For some reason he turned back, having only reached the delta of the great river which he had been descending. Why did he do this?

Not a reflection of regret do we find, nor is any indication given that he considered his northward journey ended, save for his erection of the post on which his name was engraved. An unobservant reader would suppose as he describes his journey among the islands of the delta that he was following the same course down stream as he had been pursuing for the preceding six weeks.

However, closer attention will show that on July 16th, after discussing with the Indian guide the possibility of the party meeting with friendly Indians, who might inform them further of the route, Mackenzie received the information that he would not

likely meet them unless it were at a small river coming from the east which fell into the great one. The journal says: "We accordingly made for the river, and stemmed the current." Here is the first indication that the explorer had given up his journey, and was now ascending the river.

The delta of the great river had been full of interest for the whole party. One day Mackenzie's men saw a great many animals in the water which they had thought at first were pieces of ice. These they found to be whales, and the party took to their boats in hot pursuit. The prey, however, evaded the pursuers, and it was well. As the explorer says, "it was a very fortunate circumstance that we failed in our attempt to overtake them, as a stroke from the tail of one of these enormous fish would have dashed the canoe to pieces."

Before getting back from this vain expedition a fierce north-east wind arose, and a heavy fog fell; the waters rose in violence, and the party reached the land with the greatest difficulty. The only satisfactory course seemed to be to keep in the lee of the islands, which, as already mentioned, he called the Whale Islands, on the greatest of which he had encamped.

We are thus left to infer the reasons for his hasty return, which the explorer seems to attempt so ingeniously to gloss over. The Indians had found it difficult to obtain much game, the party had not more than five hundred pounds of food supply on

hand, and the prospect of facing an Arctic winter with its decreasing amount of game was, even to so brave a man as Alexander Mackenzie, sufficiently alarming. The islands on which they had encamped were exposed to the winds off the icefields, and they here found the weather at the season which elsewhere would be the middle of summer, most severe. The entry in the journal for July 15th is: "As the evening approached the wind increased, and the weather became cold. Two swans were the only provision which the hunters procured for us."

Moreover, there are constant indications that the guide wished to return homeward, and the "English chief" after reaching the lower portions of the river gave evidence very clearly that he would prefer to be back in his own region of Athabaska. Certainly the ice on the lower part of the river suggested that the short summer would soon be over, and pointed to the necessity of hastening southward. Mackenzie's reticence in regard to the reason for his sudden departure southward is undoubtedly very remarkable.

One remark alone in the later part of his voyage may give a clue to his course of action. On August 13th, nearly a month after the return voyage was begun, the feeling of distrust between the "English chief" and the commander showed itself very clearly. After giving an account of the altercation, Mackenzie, in the journal, says: "I stated to him that I had come a great way, and at a very con-

siderable expense, without having completed the object of my wishes, and that I suspected he had concealed from me a principal part of what the natives had told him respecting the country, *lest he should have been obliged to follow me.*" Here, then, seems the explanation that a cabal had been made against Mackenzie by reason of which he could not obtain the necessary information to enable him to proceed. It would have been more satisfactory to us if the explorer, who had so nearly accomplished his object, had taken us into his confidence.

On the day of their return southward Mackenzie records seeing the first spruce tree that had been in view for some time. He makes the remark that it is extraordinary that there should be any wood whatever in a country where the ground never thaws below five inches from the surface. But as the ascent of the river was made the weather became pleasant, and the evidences of animal life in the flocks of wild fowl and their young became more frequent.

Numbers of the natives, not seen on the way down the river and who were strange to the ways of white men, were now met. "They were alarmed at the firearms in our hands, and asked us not to discharge them in their presence." When they saw the explorer engaged in writing, their curiosity was excited. Through the medium of the "English chief" Mackenzie ascertained that these Indians had learned from the Eskimos, whom they had met, that they had seen large canoes (ships) full of white men, to

the westward, eight or ten winters before, from whom they had obtained iron in exchange for leather. The expanse of water where they had met them was called by them Belboullay Toe or White Man's Lake.

On July 24th the exploring party passed a small river, on each side of which the Indians and Eskimos collected flint. The bank was crumbling away in places, and among the débris were found pieces of petroleum, having the appearance of yellow wax. A few days more brought the returning travellers to the zone of huckle-berries, raspberries, and that fruit widespread throughout the fur trader's country, the Saskatoon berry, known to the French-Canadians as *poire.*

Fifteen days after the return journey was begun Mackenzie's party reached the entrance of the rushing stream running into the great river from Great Bear Lake. Being now the first day of the month of August the explorers passed here the first night, since leaving Lake Athabaska, in which it was dark enough to see the stars. As the party came to this precipitous part of the river they were compelled to take to the shore, and, walking along it, to use their towing lines to drag the canoes up the stream. At times on the banks of the river, at this point, their attention was called to the whole bank giving off a sulphurous smell. The source of this odour proved to be a seam of coal which had been on fire for years.

About August 11th Mackenzie began to find the "English chief" restless and moody. The wily leader seems to have been afraid that the explorer would leave the great river, and explore some of the larger tributaries coming into it from the east. The "English chief" had told some of the French-Canadians that he intended before the party reached Slave Lake to leave them, and make a visit to a tribe of Indians, whom he knew.

It was at this juncture that the "English chief" drew upon himself the reproaches of Mackenzie, to which reference has been made. When rebuked the "English chief" denied the charges made by the explorer, stated that he would not accompany the party any further, and after the Indian fashion gave way to a loud and bitter lamentation, in which his relatives assisted him in their vociferations of grief, though they gave as their excuse that their tears flowed for their dead friends. Mackenzie, after two hours of this extravagant sorrow, soothed their wounded feelings, and the chief returned to his allegiance.

On August 22nd the party was rejoiced at reaching Great Slave Lake; here, making use of sails on their canoes, they greatly hastened their speed. Two days afterwards the worried explorer was rejoiced to meet his trader Leroux, whom he had left on the lake to pursue the fur trade. Leroux had not succeeded very well, but had visited a band of Indians on Martin Lake, and obtained a number

of peltries. While on Great Slave Lake Mackenzie matured a plan for sending Leroux, under the guidance of the "English chief" to visit the Beaver Indians, whose country lay to the west. When he reached Leroux' house, which had been built at the mouth of Yellow Knife River, and which afterwards became known as Fort Providence, he tells us "he spent the whole night making the necessary arrangements for the embarkation of the morning, and in preparing instructions for Leroux."

Leaving his faithful trader Leroux, whose name as a pioneer has ever since been associated with Great Slave Lake, Mackenzie and his party struck across the lake, and after a somewhat stormy passage arrived at the entrance of the river running from the south into Slave Lake, at which point Leroux' first house for trading had been built. The ascent of the river—the Slave—had now to be made, and its rapids and fierce eddies required skill in his canoemen, though the effort of the ascent was not, on the whole, more arduous than that of the descent had been.

To face the well-known portages gave some variety and excitement to the sturdy French-Canadians, who had gone the whole journey without a murmur, and who had the greatest confidence in *L'Écossais*, commanding and imperative as he was to them and to all. Ten days sufficed to traverse the distance of something more than two hundred and sixty miles,

and the fact that on the day before their arrival at Lake Athabaska "it froze hard during the night, and was very cold throughout the day," showed how fortunate the party was in reaching its destination at the very spot where they had encamped on June 3rd.

The last entry of the journal is as follows:— *September 12th, 1789.* "The weather was cloudy, and also very cold. At eight we embarked with a north-east wind, and entered the Lake of the Hills. About ten the wind veered to the westward, and was as strong as we could bear it with the high sail, so that we arrived at Fort Chipewyan by three in the afternoon, where we found Mr. McLeod with five men busily employed in building a new house. Thus, then, we concluded this voyage, which had occupied the considerable space of *one hundred and two days.*"

The results of this great journey of Alexander Mackenzie down La Grande Rivière are worthy of consideration:—

1. There was opened up to the knowledge of the world a region some two thousand miles in length, with resources of coal, petroleum, salt, and furs that are only now beginning to be fully known.

2. Mackenzie, from conference with the Indians met on the lower Mackenzie River, established the existence and course of the Yukon River more correctly than it was laid down on the maps for two generations following his time. He made out that

the Yukon emptied into Norton Sound rather than into the Arctic Sea, as some early maps give it.

3. The great explorer, though of a commanding spirit, adopted in treating the Indians the pacific measures which have always been successful with them, and began the policy which was consistently followed by the Hudson's Bay Company during the century just closed.

4. While the daring leader took with him a certain quantity of provisions, leaving at Ile à la Cache a small supply of pemmican for his return journey, yet in the main he adopted the policy afterwards followed by the Arctic explorer, Dr. John Rae, on his great journey up the west coast of Hudson Bay in search of Franklin, viz., of depending on the game and fish that might be secured along the line of exploration. Mackenzie's journal gives minute accounts of the number of ducks, geese, swans, beavers, reindeer, and fish obtained *en route.*

5. The explorer gathered much useful knowledge from Indian and Eskimo hearsay and experience, which led him to infer from their story of Belbouillay Toe or White Man's Lake (or Sea) that they were speaking of the great Pacific Ocean, and referred to Spanish expeditions or perhaps to the voyage of the celebrated Captain Cook up the west coast of America some ten or eleven years before.

Mackenzie, by his determined courage, reticence, and prudence, by his shrewdness and intelligence, and by his consummate leadership, added not only

to the sum total of British heroism, but also on this voyage secured the experience and laid the foundation for the greater expedition by which he was to gain his chief fame as being the first white man north of Mexico to cross the continent to the Pacific Ocean.

CHAPTER VI

A WIDER HORIZON

ARRIVING in September at Fort Chipewyan Alexander Mackenzie entered upon a restful winter, the affairs of the fort being well administered by his cousin Roderick. During the absence of the great explorer in the far north, Roderick McKenzie had gone down the long route to Grand Portage to carry his furs and plan for further trade. By meeting the other traders there he came in touch with the views and projects of the company.

That winter brought the whole matter of exploration before the traders in their far northern post, Fort Chipewyan. Roderick McKenzie informed his cousin that the partners at Grand Portage had no friendly feeling for the spirit of exploration. They regarded the returned voyager from the "Great River" as ambitious, and as being more chimerical than practical. Alexander Mackenzie was, moreover, considered by them, both by disposition and previous connections, as being not thoroughly loyal to the united companies.

But the project of a greater effort and greater fame occupied the imagination of the explorer all that winter, and in spring as soon as the rivers were open he went eastward to Grand Portage

with a great purpose throbbing in his bosom. As he journeyed eastward, and met other traders hieing away to the rendezvous, he obtained scraps of news, and was most faithful in sending them to lonely Fort Chipewyan. He informed his cousin that food was very scarce at the dépôt from which Athabaska was supplied, also that McTavish was greatly dissatisfied with the packs of furs from Athabaska for the past year; but that the various traders on their downward journey were carrying a very successful catch as the result of the past winter's work. From Grand Portage he writes expressing dissatisfaction, and says, "My expedition was hardly spoken of, but that is what I expected."

However, the disappointed trader returned from Grand Portage realizing that he had a growing number of friends among the wintering parties, and that *Le marquis* (McTavish) was losing influence on account of his haughty temper and domineering spirit. Sending his cousin Roderick to Great Slave Lake, Alexander Mackenzie occupied Fort Chipewyan for another winter. Some of his letters to his relative are extant, and these show an intimate interest in the affairs of the far north. He speaks of organizing the Yellow Knives more fully as a tribe, and appointing a chief over them. Reference is also made to the question of continuing the fort on Great Slave Lake. The explorer is willing to do this if trade demands it, but is of opinion that a fort will need to be established on the south side of the

lake near the entrance of the Slave River, instead of the house built by Leroux on the far northern arm of Slave Lake. He shows his expansive spirit by referring to the other Indians, upon whom he had stumbled on his great voyage. He refers with strange self-depreciation to the great river, which he had discovered, under the unlikely name of "River Disappointment;" and asks his cousin to make diligent enquiry among the Indians "regarding a great river [Yukon] which is reported to run parallel with, and falls into the sea to the westward of the river on which I voyaged, and to commit such information to paper." He refers in the spring to his regret that it is not his cousin's turn to thread the watercourses to the great meeting in Grand Portage, and is sorry that he will not have his company.

If the adventurous journey of Alexander Mackenzie had not been appreciated by his own companions of the North-West it was otherwise with their rivals of the Hudson's Bay Company. Four years before Mackenzie had gone north, the desperado of the company, Peter Pond, had made a map of the country for the purpose of presenting it to the Empress of Russia. Through knowing nothing of astronomy or geography, Pond made up his distances from the stories of the *voyageurs*, who made a league's journey in the time it took to smoke a pipe. The *voyageurs'* leagues were thus too hastily made. Counting in this fashion Pond made the distance from Hudson Bay to Athabaska much

longer than it really was, and, knowing from Captain Cook's observations the number of miles from Hudson Bay to the Pacific coast, he made the unknown territory west of Athabaska much less than it really was.

Though not distinguished in exploration, the Hudson's Bay Company, no doubt impelled by the desire to meet their rivals, and also proud of Hearne's successful explorations twenty years before Mackenzie's Arctic journey, sent out from England a young lad named George Charles to assist in exploration. The lad was only fifteen years of age, had received one year's instruction in a mathematical school, and was consequently quite incompetent to do the work of taking astronomical observations and reckoning distances.

The British government was at this time engaged in delimiting this territory and that of their rebellious colonies, which had separated as the United States, and were anxious to secure as large a territory as possible. In order that full information might be at its disposal the government asked the Hudson's Bay Company to carry on explorations and secure all possible knowledge of the country even to the Pacific Ocean. Induced to do so by the Colonial Office, the company in 1791 sent out as astronomer Philip Turner, a most competent man, to obtain the information sought for. Coming with imperial authority the expedition was entitled to the recognition of the North-West Company as well as of its rivals.

Alexander Mackenzie, on his way eastward, heard of the coming of the expedition, and wrote to his cousin at Fort Chipewyan to make preparations for assisting it, and instructed him to lodge "the English," as he calls them, if there should be room in the fort. Fourteen days later Alexander Mackenzie writes from a point farther to the east, stating that he had met Mr. Turner, and says, "I find the intention of the expedition is discoveries only. I also find the party ill-prepared for the undertaking."

This remark shows that the Nor'-Westers had entertained some suspicion as to the Turner expedition, but the meeting had satisfied Mackenzie that they should not only not assume hostility towards this undertaking, but should even help to forward its aims. He states that Mr. Ross, the leader of the expedition, wished to pass the winter at Fort Chipewyan, and to secure storage at the fort for some of his baggage when he proceeded further on his journey. It was found, however, by astronomer Turner, as he wintered at Fort Chipewyan and enjoyed the hospitality of the North-West Company's officers, that the purpose of his expedition could be accomplished without proceeding further. He took correct observations, and, on finding that the fort was in 115° west longitude, showed that instead of Lake Athabaska being only a short distance from the coast, as Pond had maintained, it was more than three hundred leagues from it.

Alexander Mackenzie had already taken so strong a grasp of North-West affairs that he was a necessary figure at the great annual meeting at Grand Portage. Writing in August to his cousin Roderick at Fort Chipewyan as to the results of the council, he informs him that the public announcement could now be made of a re-arrangement of the North-West Company's affairs for the next seven years, 1791-8. The well-known names still appear as partners: McTavish, Frobisher and Company hold six-twentieths of the stock; Montour, Grant, Small, Gregory, Pangman, and Alexander Mackenzie each one-tenth; while McGillivray, who had bought out Pond for eight hundred pounds, and a Mr. Sutherland own one-twentieth each.

He gives information of the continued employment of Lesieur and Fraser in the far west, of his deputy, Leroux, in the far north, of Cuthbert Grant in the centre country, of trader Thorburn, and of the astronomer Thompson, to whom further reference will be made. A reference to his proposed continuation of his visit to Montreal, and of the possibility of his taking a journey across the ocean, closes the letter to his faithful kinsman in far-off Athabaska.

Alexander Mackenzie carried out the journey of which he had hinted to his cousin. The reason for this trip was found in the great project of further exploration that Mackenzie had harboured in his bosom. On his former journey to the Arctic the explorer had found his lack of astronomical know-

ledge and the want of proper instruments a serious drawback in marking the steps of his journey from day to day, and in fixing with any degree of accuracy the points necessary either for proper description or for affording the material for making correct maps.

Accordingly, Mackenzie determined to spend his winter in Britain, perfecting his knowledge and obtaining the necessary instruments for use in his proposed exploration. How this winter was spent we have no information, but we may be sure it was used to some purpose. It was no easy thing for a man who had become already so prominent in the fur trade to gather himself together in a remote Hyperborean fort, make arrangements in the face of jealous and unsympathetic partners, absent himself from his work and responsibilities for a year, and cherish the purpose of gaining some higher niche in the temple of fame by his sacrifice.

Probably another aspect of the matter would cause Mackenzie's greatest self-denial, that is, stooping again to become a learner. If we do not mistake Mackenzie's character, he was a stalwart, self-possessed, and somewhat proud man. He had distinguished ability, and had with it that *perfervidum ingenium Scotorum* that gives, not precisely self-confidence, but a dignified self-respect that we call manliness. It was not easy for such a man to sit at the feet of however distinguished a teacher and imbibe the elements of mathematical science. It was

only pressing ambition and thirst for useful service for his company and country that nerved Alexander Mackenzie thus to humble himself.

CHAPTER VII

WINTER ON PEACE RIVER

HIS object in Great Britain having been gained, Alexander Mackenzie returned during the summer in time for the great meeting at Grand Portage in August; and the affairs of the traders being arranged for another year, he hurried back to Athabaska to meet his cousin and talk over future plans. His design, until then kept secret, was made known. He had early in the season sent word to Fort Chipewyan that a small party should be sent on to Peace River to cut square timber for a house, go on with its construction, and surround it with palisades.

This was not the first expedition to Peace River, for it will be remembered Alexander Mackenzie sent, in 1788, trader Boyer to found a post on the Peace River, where the soil is exceedingly fertile and the climate mild enough to allow the growth of turnips, carrots, parsnips, and potatoes. The spot selected by Boyer had in the four intervening years already gained the name of the "Old Establishment."

On October 10th, 1792, Mackenzie, having arranged to leave Fort Chipewyan under his cousin Roderick's control, prepared to push on to his winter

quarters on Peace River. Steering west his two canoes, which were laden with his men and the necessary articles for trade, Mackenzie came to the Vail River, which afforded a passage to Peace River, and in two days was on his way up the Peace River itself. Peace Point was soon reached, this name having been given to a portion of the bank of the river formerly in dispute between the Kinistineaux (Crees) and the Beaver Indians. Here the quarrel had been settled, and the spot was henceforth memorable. The falls of Peace River, twenty feet high, were avoided by a portage, and the party soon came to the Old Establishment. Mr. Finlay, the Nor'-West trader who had just reached the fort over which he was placed, was overtaken by Mackenzie's party.

On the tenth day after his departure from Fort Chipewyan Alexander Mackenzie reached Finlay's Fort, and was received with the firing of guns and much demonstration. About this fort, under Finlay's charge, there was an Indian population of three hundred, sixty of whom were hunters. Waiting for two or three days Mackenzie found them coming in till their full numbers were well-nigh reached. During the whole summer it was the custom of the Nor'-Westers to give no spirits to the Indians, but now on the approach of winter they made known their desires to the great white chief. Mackenzie thus describes his method of dealing with them:—

"As they very soon expressed their desire of the

expected regale, I called them together to the number of forty-two hunters, or men capable of bearing arms, to offer some advice, which would be equally advantageous to them and to us, and I strengthened my admonition with a nine-gallon cask of reduced rum, and a quantity of tobacco. At the same time I observed that as I should not often visit them I had instanced a greater degree of liberality than they had been accustomed to."

As the ice was beginning to set on the river, Mackenzie, after spending five days with Finlay, took his leave amid the firing of musketry, having sent on his two loaded canoes two days in advance for fear of the ice.

The next place of interest reached by the explorer was the forks of the Peace River. Here the river was seen to come from two directions, one east, the other, twice its size, from the west. Pursuing the larger branch for six miles to the south-west, the spot already selected for winter quarters was reached. The place was well chosen, on the high banks of the Peace River. Cypress, arrowwood, and thorn trees covered the banks. On either side of the river, though hidden by the trees, were extensive plains, and on these buffaloes, elks, wolves, foxes, and bears abounded. Far to the west was to be seen a ridge called Deer Mountain, and here, as the name implied, great numbers of deer were found.

As soon as the explorer's tent was pitched he gathered the Indians together, and sought to gain

their favour by giving each four inches of Brazil tobacco and a dram of spirits, and by smoking the pipe of peace with them. He then addressed them, saying that he understood they had troubled the former *bourgeois*, and reproved them for this, though assuring them that he would treat them kindly if they deserved it, but severely if they showed carelessness or opposition. After bestowing more presents of the same kind, he had assurance from them of the greatest devotion and of pride that he had seen fit to visit them.

The explorer was kept busy till November 7th settling matters with the Indian hunters, and fitting them out for the winter catch. This done he immediately began the erection of his houses. The men sent on early in the season had been most industrious, and had cut and squared enough palisades eighteen feet long and seven inches in diameter to enclose a square of one hundred and twenty feet; they had dug a ditch three feet wide to receive the pickets; and had also prepared timber and planks enough for the erection of a house.

On the sixteenth of the month the ice stopped running in the other branch of the river, the tongue between the two being only a league across. The same thing happened to the stream in front of their fort six days afterwards, and the freezing of the streams enabled the hunters to move about more freely, and to secure a plentiful supply of fresh meat, although as there was no sleighing, the game

had to be carried home in a very toilsome manner on the shoulders of the men.

Mackenzie was called upon to exercise his medical skill in curing his people of several acute diseases, but all those in health were kept hard at work upon the houses. A young Indian had lost the use of his right hand by the bursting of a gun. He was brought to Mackenzie in a very bad state. Poulticing, salveing, and burning away the proud flesh with vitriol, the explorer succeeded, by this most heroic treatment, in saving the young man's life and gaining the confidence of all his friends. A murder occurred among the Indians and threw out the trader's plans for gathering furs, as all disappeared for a time lest they should be punished by the masterful man.

Until November 2nd Mackenzie took observations of the temperature with the thermometer; upon the coldest morning it registered 16° below zero. He was, however, much gratified during this inclement season, to be saluted by the singing of birds as he walked through the woods. Two days before Christmas the explorer's house was ready, and he willingly deserted his tent to occupy the rugged mansion.

Towards the end of the month what is known as a Chinook wind came sweeping down the Peace River from the west side of the mountains. It came with the force of a hurricane, licked up every particle of snow, and covered with water the ice on the river. New Year's Day, which was not quite so wild, was

observed according to the usual western custom of firing guns at the break of day. A moderate allowance of rum and cakes was provided for all.

Early in February the weather became very cold, and continued so for six weeks. None too soon for the impetuous and impatient explorer, the middle of April brought the marvellous season so well known in the North-West when winter merges suddenly into summer. The trees were in bud, and many plants were in bloom. On the twenty-fifth of that month the river was clear of ice.

A preliminary step to the great exploration he had in view was to settle up the fur trade for the winter. The furs were all gathered and packed securely for the long transport to Grand Portage. The two old canoes were repaired, and four new ones built. On May 8th the hunters and canoemen who could be spared were dispatched in these six canoes, which were filled with furs and provisions, and with a full bundle of public and private despatches to his cousin Roderick on Lake Athabaska, to be transmitted by him to the great assize of the traders at Grand Portage.

Now for the West! Mackenzie's astronomical observations were now of some value. He tested carefully the instruments which he was to use on his long journey to the western sea. He was now ready for embarkation, for he had worked out the details thoroughly during the winter. A monster canoe, twenty-five feet long, of twenty-six inches

hold and four feet nine inches beam, and yet light enough for two men to carry without fatigue for miles, was to transport the whole party and their belongings, provisions, goods for presents, arms, ammunition and baggage to the weight of three thousand pounds.

The crew was to consist of ten persons. Their names deserve to be mentioned. After the great explorer came his lieutenant—Alexander Mackay, of Reay—who relieved Mackenzie of much responsibility. He was an able man, and was chief among the notable traders who afterwards carried out the plans of John Jacob Astor on the Pacific coast. Mackay's career was afterwards arrested all too soon; he was killed on the *Tonquin*—a story of the coast known to all. Two of Mackenzie's faithful French-Canadians—Joseph Landry and Charles Ducette, who had accompanied him on his former voyage were ready to follow him on the present occasion. Four others also stood willing to go. These were Baptiste Bisson, François Courtois, Jacques Beauchamp, and François Beaulieu, the last of whom died as late as 1872, aged nearly one hundred years, probably the oldest man in the North-West at the time. Archbishop Taché gives an interesting account of Beaulieu's baptism at the age of seventy. Two Indians complete the list. One of these was so indolent that he bore the name of *cancre*—the crab.

One of the things that constantly causes our

wonder as we read the records of North-West exploration, both by Nor'-Westers and their rivals from Hudson Bay, is the magnitude of the results achieved by men so poorly provided with even the necessaries of life and travel. Here were ten men about to undertake a terrific journey of more than three hundred leagues through a country partly unknown, and such of it as was known presenting enormous difficulties. Mountain torrents must be stemmed or circumvented, vast regions must be traversed where game was reported scarce, and Indians, famed for fierceness and deceit, must for the first time be taught fear or respect for the adventurous intruders upon their hitherto unmolested domain.

That man was of heroic mould who could originate such an expedition, and could inspire other men to face such dangers, where lofty purpose and over-mastering ambition could alone nerve him through the discouraging and even desperate periods of his journey. And yet how simple and natural the explorer's account of the beginning of so great and difficult an expedition: "My winter interpreter, with another person, whom I left here to take care of the fort, and supply the natives with ammunition during the summer, shed tears on the reflection of those dangers which we might encounter in our expedition, while my own people offered up their prayers that we might return safely from it."

CHAPTER VIII

OVER THE GREAT DIVIDE

THE great voyage was now begun (May 9th, 1793). The party started out full of hope. On the Peace River, as the travellers Butler, Gordon, and others have told us, the scenery is beautiful, the banks are fertile, and animal life is abundant. An elk killed and a buffalo wounded were the achievements of the young men as they landed for the night encampment.

Mackenzie thus describes the river:—"This magnificent theatre of nature has all the decorations which the trees and animals of the country can afford it; groves of poplars in every shape vary the scene; and their intervals are enlightened with vast herds of elks and buffaloes; the former choosing the steeps and uplands, and the latter preferring the plains. . . . The whole country displayed an exuberant verdure; the trees that bear a blossom were advancing fast to that delightful appearance, and the velvet rind of their branches reflecting the oblique rays of a rising or setting sun, added a splendid gaiety to the scene, which no expressions of mine are qualified to describe."

The men of the voyage were, however, too intent on this enterprise to be delayed by the hunt or by the

fertile valleys. The banks soon rose to greater heights, and the navigation became even more difficult. The cascades and rapids became correspondingly more trying, and soon the first band of Rocky Mountain Indians who were questioned failed to tell anything of the route beyond the first mountains, though they took much interest in the proposed expedition. Within three days of starting it became evident that bears were very numerous. Along the bank footprints were seen of the great grizzly, the terror of Indian and trader alike. The monotony was varied by the *voyageurs* having to gum their canoe, which had already met hard usage ; by stopping to examine an island with canoe-birch growing upon it; by passing the entry of a tributary river ; and by watching the shore for bears and buffaloes.

A dangerous rapid well-nigh put an end to their canoe on the tenth day out, and thus some delay occurred. Again *en route* the party saw the strength of the stream increase. The shore rose three hundred feet above the water, and on the following day the members of the party were compelled to cut steps in a soft stone wall around a boiling rapid, in doing which their canoe was broken. No bark was found with which to mend it, and poles were used to steady the canoe till at last in a bottomless whirlpool all help failed. The river became one continuous rapid, and even the well-trained *voyageurs* were thoroughly alarmed.

Discontent now very naturally began to prevail

among the men. Mackenzie had little hope himself. Further progress up the river by canoe seemed impossible. Clambering with his Indians to the heights above the river the explorer took observations, and his own account of the situation is: "The river is not more than fifty yards wide, and flows between stupendous rocks, from whence huge fragments sometimes tumble down, and falling from such height form the beach between the rocky projections."

It seemed as if an impassable barrier had been reached. Mackenzie sent Mackay and the men up the steep banks to explore, and they returned through woods, over steep hills, and through deep valleys, with the news that the rapids extended for three leagues. They were not, however, discouraged, and the narrator states that a "kettle of wild rice, sweetened with sugar, along with the usual regale of rum," renewed their courage.

After the return of this scouting party, the resolve was taken to fight a way through the obstacles, and persevere in the journey. Cutting a road through the thicket, and up rocky steeps, slow progress was made—a mile on one day, three miles the next—over steep hills, dragging the canoe on the toilsome march, until, after making about eight miles in three days, they succeeded in passing above the falls of the river, and in bringing up all their baggage. A longer route taken by the Indians could have been followed. It was probably a foolish thing to take the more

direct way, but it was certainly an exhibition of British endurance. The fall that had been passed was the one of which the River Indians had asserted that it was equal to Niagara. In this they were of course mistaken.

The rapids passed, the canoe was again committed to the opposing stream, and the journey resumed. They were now completely surrounded by mountains, whose tops were perhaps fifteen hundred feet above the stream. The altitude was beginning to influence the temperature. The journey, though near the end of May, was sometimes interrupted by the party landing to build a fire, on which occasion what the commander continues to call a "regale" of rum was always indulged in with satisfaction.

On the last day of the month the forks of the Peace River were reached, and the party was much troubled as to which branch of the stream should be followed. Mackenzie was anxious to take that coming from the north-west, but the old Indian guide insisted that by taking that from the south-east a carrying-place would soon be reached by which another large river would be accessible. On one of the last days of the month the commander himself began to feel that his voyage was becoming a heavy burden. Thoughts of the lower country recurred to him, and he took an empty rum-keg, and after writing a full account of his voyage thus far, placed it in the keg, which he carefully sealed up and committed to the rushing river to be carried perhaps to

some kind friend, or to be picked up by some other explorer as his last memorial. The crew, also driven nearly to desperation, in their fancy heard a discharge of firearms, which arose entirely from their disturbed imaginations. They were quite mistaken as to its being a war party of the Kinistineaux, as no Indians appeared.

Mackenzie, Mackay, and all their followers were now becoming sceptical as to there being any carrying-place over the mountain height. The leader and his lieutenant, leaving the canoe, betook themselves to a mountain on the river bank, laboriously clambered to the top of it, and Mackenzie climbed the highest tree on the height. He saw only a vast wooded expanse before him. The mid-day sun proved very hot to the party shut up in the forest, and mosquitoes were a continual plague.

On the return of the two spies their canoe was gone, whether up or down stream they could not tell. Great anxiety and many gloomy surmises filled their minds, but in time the crew, which had found the river exceedingly difficult, appeared. The strong current had broken their canoe, and thus delayed them.

On Sunday, June 9th, the party was surprised to hear confused sounds in front of them. They proceeded from some Indians who had chanced to see them, and had become much alarmed. Not knowing how strong or in what mood their unseen neighbours might be, Mackenzie directed his boat-

men to cross to the opposite side of the river. When they were not more than half way across the river, two men appeared upon the cliff brandishing their spears, and showing their bows and arrows in token of defiance, meanwhile shouting loudly. After parleying, however, they were reassured, and the party joined them on the shore. They had never seen white men before. They examined the newcomers with the greatest care. The whole Indian encampment proved small. There were only three men, three women, and seven or eight boys and girls.

Mackenzie's hopes of finding the carrying-place, and the way over the height, now began to rise again. The Indians, however, professed the utmost ignorance of any such thing. The explorer plied them with presents, gave sweets to the children, and made himself most friendly. They still denied any knowledge of the road he sought. Time is of value in dealing with Indians, and so Mackenzie continued to delay, hoping to gain the much desired information. Their reticence was probably ignorance and mental obliquity rather than any studied concealment.

One evening one of the men lingered by the fire after the others had retired. In talking he let fall a reference to a great river, and pointed significantly up the river on which they were. Pressed by Mackenzie he at length admitted that there was a great river flowing towards the mid-day sun (south), of which a branch flowed near the river up which they

were proceeding. He stated also that there was a small river leading from the Peace River into three small lakes connected by portages, and that these emptied into the great south river. He denied any knowledge, however, that the great river emptied into the sea.

Before giving up the matter with the Indian, Mackenzie succeeded in getting a map of the region, with its rivers and lakes drawn on a strip of bark by a piece of coal. One of the Indians was now induced to act as guide to the desired spot.

On the day after the interview with the friendly Indian the party started, and two days afterwards quitted the main branch, and, working their way in the canoe painfully up the encumbered stream, reached the first small lake. The whole country in the neighbourhood was flooded, so that the canoe passed among the branches of the trees. They were surrounded by the evidences of life. No Indians were met, but beavers abounded; swans were numerous; ducks and geese were plentiful in this secluded retreat; tracks of the moose were visible; blue jays, yellow-heads, and one humming-bird cheered their hearts; and wild parsnips, of which the *voyageurs* were fond, grew in abundance.

On June 12th, 1793, Mackenzie makes the important announcement:—"The lake is about two miles in length, east by south, and from three to five hundred yards wide. *This I consider as the highest and southernmost source* of the Unjijah or

Peace River" (latitude 54° 24′ north, longitude 121° west). It was a long way from this mountain jungle to the mouth of the river which he had seen when approaching the Arctic Sea.

Hope had now reached fruition. The height of land had been gained. The boat crew landed and unloaded their canoe, and here they saw running over a low ridge of land—eight hundred and seventeen paces long—a beaten path to another lake. On each side of the lake was a mountain, the space of the lake between them being about a quarter of a mile. A *cache* of Indian supplies—nets, hooks, and some implements—was found. Mackenzie took what he wanted of them, and left in exchange a knife, fire steels, beads, awls, etc. At this point two streams tumble down the rocks from the right and flow eastward towards the other lake; and from the left two other streams pour down the rocks and empty into the lake they were approaching. Proceeding west the water was now flowing with them, and they were beginning to descend the western slope. Six miles from the third lake a careful and painful effort was made, and the western side was reached. The river ran with "great rapidity, and rushed impetuously over a bed of flat stones." Beside this far west stream they encamped for the night.

The boiling waters of this treacherous river were worse than anything they had seen on Peace River. On the resumption of the journey after their long portage the canoe had been dashed with fury on the

rocks. Then a few holes were stove in the bottom, and the sad condition of the *voyageurs* was such that the "Indians without attempting to help, sat down and gave vent to their tears." The canoe escaped destruction, although ammunition and some utensils of value were lost. While mending the shattered canoe Mackenzie despatched two of his men through the westward thickets to find the great river they were seeking.

On June 19th Mackenzie makes this announcement: "The morning was foggy, and at three we were on the water."

The story of the succeeding days need hardly be given. The travellers were on the stream which Simon Fraser descended in 1806, this has always been regarded as one of the most dangerous feats ever undertaken by man. With every variety of anxiety and hardship they courageously braced themselves to the effort, and for three days continued the descent.

On the way a band of intelligent Indians was met, whose chief was a sagamore of great age and wisdom. The old chief informed the explorer that he was not on the way to the western sea. He was going southward, and the sea lay to the west. Provisions were getting short, and the prospect was that, if any time were lost, there could be no return to Lake Athabaska during the season then in progress. He was informed that he should have left the Nechaco, or Fraser River, a considerable distance

up, by a small tributary flowing into it from the west.

To turn back is not easy for any one, much less to a man of Alexander Mackenzie's stamp. But the Indians adhered to their former statements, and startled him with their frankness. One said, "What can be the reason that you are so particular and anxious in your enquiries of us respecting a knowledge of this country? Do not you white men know everything in the world?"

These were hard questions for the explorer. Mackenzie gathered his company around him, and laid before them the alternative of going back, or of going on and proceeding by the land route to the sea. To his surprise and gratification they all declared in favour of the march to the sea. Mackay, the faithful lieutenant, engraved the explorer's name and the date of arrival at this farthest point down the Fraser River on a tree upon the banks of the stream.

And now on the west side of the great divide the party is pausing before the return journey up the furious Fraser.

CHAPTER IX

FIRST TO THE PACIFIC AND RETURN

ON June 23rd the famous party having decided to descend the Tacouche Tessé or Nechaco (Fraser) River no further, prepared to ascend the river until they reached the newly-decided course by which they would proceed by land to the Pacific Ocean. Just as the party was ready to depart the guide proposed to save time by crossing by land to his lodge, and then to meet the party farther up the river. Mackenzie did not relish the proposal, thinking it merely a plan of the guide to desert the party. The leader was helpless to prevent the course suggested, and so the guide and his people departed by land.

Rumours and suspicions now haunted the minds of Mackenzie and his followers. It was said hostile Indians were likely to beset their way, and they were thrown on their guard. The explorer deemed it best to stay for a time at their encampment, which they named Deserter's Creek.

While waiting here a peculiar incident happened. The explorer was awakened at midnight by a rustling noise in the forest and the barking of dogs. Later on the sentinel announced to the leader that he saw a human being creeping along on all fours

about fifty paces above the camp. This was thought at first to be a bear, but proved to be an old man, blind and infirm, who had been left behind by the Indians, and had lain hidden and without food for two days. This strange prisoner was obstinate and somewhat knowing. He was, as the party moved slowly up the river, taken with them by force, and at last after efforts to escape was left by his own request on Canoe Island, being provided with a supply of food. As long as the old man was with Mackenzie he proved through his restlessness and cunning a veritable, "old man of the sea."

Mackenzie's canoe had now become so leaky that steps to repair it became necessary. On the twenty-eighth of the month the work of building another canoe was undertaken. Different parties were sent into the woods in search of bark, watape (the fine roots of the thorn used for sewing the bark), and gum. After several failures at last the materials were provided. But now the foreman of the canoe-builders was very slow and half-hearted. Mackenzie berated him, telling him he knew he did not wish to go on with the journey. To his whole party, however, the brave explorer again declared that he would go at all hazards, even if he went alone, and he thus shamed his followers into action.

On July 3rd the expedition reached the mouth of a small river, which he called the West Road River. This ran into the Nechaco from the west. The question now was whether to follow this river to the

coast, or to ascend the great river further north before taking the westward direction. His followers on being called together in council decided to ascend the great river further. Their decision was wise, for during the day they saw two canoes approaching them from the north, and to their surprise and joy one of these contained the guide, who had, as they supposed, deserted them, and six of his relatives. A painted beaver robe adorned the returning wanderer, and he was made still more gorgeous by presents from Mackenzie, who was also liberal to the friends of the guide.

The Indians were of the Tinné or Chipewyan tribe, which is found from Lake Athabaska up the Peace River nearly to the Pacific coast. They were now near the starting-place for the seaboard. Mackenzie and his Frenchmen allowed the Indians to go on ahead, and meanwhile took precaution to bury, under the ashes of their fire, supplies of pemmican, wild rice, a keg of gunpowder, and near by two bags of Indian corn, to await their return. Overtaking the advance guard, the party assembled and proceeded to build a stage on which to place their canoe, and a square enclosure of logs to contain all articles which might be left behind when they undertook their land journey.

All was now ready, and, heavily laden with food, arms, and ammunition, French-Canadians and Indians prepared for the long tramp, the leader taking as his share of the burden his astronomical instru-

ments. The party started on short rations of two meals a day. Ascending a steep hill they trudged wearily westward, and halted at an Indian camp. This was twelve miles from the place of departure, and here they were joined by a number of Indians who were to accompany them.

Journeying steadily westward, meeting new Indians, and entering their houses; wearied by long and trying marches; seeing snow-capped mountains along the way; once or twice, though short of food, hiding pemmican along the trail for the return journey; and keeping up the spirits of his followers, now by fault-finding, now by persuasion, this born leader of men urged his way to the long-desired western sea.

As the travellers pushed on over their course, new scenes met them. The Indians increased in numbers, lived in better houses, and seemed to be in much better circumstances. At one point Mackenzie and Mackay were received by a chief in truly baronial style, every deference and consideration being shown them by this forest magnifico.

On July 18th a river was reached, and with canoes obtained from the thrifty natives the *voyageurs* returned to their native element, and were at home on the rushing river, with their faces towards the sea.

At one point the superstition of the Indians led them to bring their sick to Mackenzie. Some cases were beyond the explorer's skill, and he describes

the orgies by which the medicine men sought to cure those patients afflicted by the most aggravated ulcerous wounds. When Mackenzie deigned to heal, his chief recourse was to Turlington's balsam, which he declared to be a safe remedy, especially when only a few drops in warm water were applied.

The explorer thus describes his visit to a great chief of the region, and we see readily that the Indians had far more intercourse with white traders on the Pacific seaboard than was generally supposed:

July 19th, 1793. "I paid a visit to the chief, who presented me with a roasted salmon; he then opened up his chests, and took out of one of them a garment of blue cloth, decorated with brass buttons, and another of flowered cotton. These I supposed were Spanish. They had been trimmed with leather fringe after the fashion of their own cloaks. Copper and brass are in great estimation among them, and of the former they have great plenty. They point their arrows and spears with it, and work it up into personal ornaments, such as collars, ear-rings, and bracelets, which they wear on their wrists, arms, and legs. . . . They also have plenty of iron. I saw some of their twisted collars of that metal which weighed upwards of twelve pounds. . . They have various trinkets, but their manufactured articles consist only of poniards and daggers. Some of the former have very neat handles, with a silver coin or a quarter or eighth of a dollar fixed on the end of them."

Mackenzie was about to take an observation to learn his whereabouts, but he was suddenly stopped by the chief, probably on some superstitious ground. His ready acquiescence in the chief's wishes was probably a benefit to the expedition, as it led to his being supplied with a canoe, fully equipped, in which he was able to pursue his voyage, accompanied by the young chief as a special mark of his favour.

Before leaving Mackenzie discovered that the chief had no fear of the instruments, except that he was apprehensive that they might drive the salmon from the river. He also pointed out the large cedar canoe, forty-five feet long, in which, ten years before, he had gone to the south with forty of his Indians, and had seen two large vessels filled with white men, who received him kindly. These were, no doubt, the ships under command of Captain Cook.

Under the guidance of the young chief the expedition went on its way down the river, the Bella Coolla, soon to find it difficult to navigate on account of the many channels into which the river divides. It now began to show the influence of the tides, and the Indian guides evinced a great disposition to desert the party, no doubt dreading the fierce natives they would soon encounter on the coast. Their stock of food was also well-nigh exhausted. Small mussels or anything eatable were regarded as valuable. Seeking shelter from the wind in the channels of the river, the party kept near the land, and here met three canoes with

fifteen men in them. These Indians were rather aggressive. They examined with some forwardness the belongings of the white men, and assumed an air of indifference and disdain. One of them, indeed, was insolent, and declared that a large canoe had lately been in the bay, and that one of the men whom he called "Macubah" (Vancouver) had fired on him and his friends, and that "Bensins" (Johnstone—Vancouver's lieutenant) had struck him on the back with the flat part of his sword. The insolent Indian then persuaded Mackenzie's Indians to leave him. A troublesome savage actually pushed his way into Mackenzie's canoe, and insisted on examining the explorer's hat and handkerchief.

Mackenzie now determined to land, but the attitude of the Indians led him to think it well to take precautions for defence. Accordingly, in landing, the white men and servants took possession of a high rock. The people who had come in the first three canoes were the most troublesome, but in time they went away. The natives having left the party unmolested, the hungry *voyageurs* took such a meal as they could spare from their scanty viands. Lying down on the rock, which was little larger than was needed for their accommodation, the members of the expedition remained strictly on the defensive.

Mackenzie, now wishing to mark his visit, determined to make an inscription on the side of the good rock that had served him for defence. So he mixed a quantity of vermilion with melted grease, and

wrote on the inland face of the rock: "*Alexander Mackenzie from Canada by land, the twenty-second of July, one thousand seven hundred and ninety-three. Lat. 52° 20′ 48″ N.*"

It is rather a curious fact that one of Vancouver's ships was, on the very day of Mackenzie's arrival, anchored off Point Maskelyne on the coast, some two and a half degrees north of Mackenzie, at the point where one of Vancouver's lieutenants had fired upon a group of Indians, as referred to by the insolent native.

The proximity of Vancouver's force was unknown to Mackenzie, and so of no help to him. Not liking the situation on the top of the memorial rock, the explorer moved his camp three miles further away from the Indian village, to a retired cave on the coast. The conduct of the Indians and their thievish disposition annoyed him.

After having had some trouble with the young chief who accompanied him, the explorer determined to start on his return journey. Before doing so he took five astronomical observations, and worked out the longitude to be 128.2° W. He makes a remark as to Captain Meares, an explorer who had visited the Pacific coast in 1787-9, claiming that there was a practicable north-west passage south of 69.5° N. Mackenzie's first voyage showed the impossibility of this, and Vancouver's survey of the coast proved the absurdity of the contention.

Leaving the encampment Mackenzie now moved

with his followers towards the river, and came into the part of it since known as Mackenzie's Outlet. He soon had further evidence of the hostility of the Indians and found that it arose from the incitement of the Indian who constantly spoke of "Macubah" and "Bensins." One day one of the rascals seized Mackenzie from behind, but the stalwart leader shook him off. The approach of some of Mackenzie's followers caused a hasty retreat on the part of the assailants. Irritated by the forwardness of the Indians the explorer went to the village, and courageously demanded articles which they had stolen and a supply of fish. These demands were met, and the supplies were paid for. The exploring party designated the hamlet of these miserable beings, "the rascals' village."

On July 23rd the ascent of the river was begun on the return voyage. Much discontent, however, prevailed among the members of the party. They were irritated and tired by the hardships through which they had passed. But there was no help now for their condition. Having embarked they began their tedious journey by having to pull themselves up the rapid river by the branches of the overhanging trees.

After two days of fatiguing travel the party arrived at a village where the medical skill of the leader had been exerted upon the sick son of the chief. The youth had died and now the blame was being put upon Mackenzie. Signs of hostility were shown

as the explorers approached the village. The chief sought to avoid the leader. Brought face to face with him the old man threw a purse, which had been stolen from the whites, fiercely at Mackenzie. A gift of cloth and of knives, however, restored the peace which had been broken. On the next day the party arrived at what they had called the "friendly village," and their treatment here was most kindly. Mackenzie gives a somewhat detailed account of the life and language of the friendly villagers.

Thus with stirring incidents the journey was continued, until, on August 13th, they reached the lofty mountains which all travellers see in coming from the coast to the Rockies, "perpendicular as a wall, and giving the idea of a succession of enormous Gothic churches." The mountains closely hemmed in the party. On the sixteenth the height of land was gained which separates the Columbia from the Peace River, and "on the following day," the narrator says, "we began to glide along with the current of the Peace River." With monotonous sameness the journey continued, the chief interruption being, as before, the *portage de la Montagne de Roche*, though the killing of a buffalo there supplied the hungry travellers with a very acceptable change of food. For seven days they continued their descent of the eastern slope of the mountains until they reached the neighbourhood of the fort at the forks of the Peace River. In the words of the leader himself: "At length, as we rounded a point and came in view of the fort, we

threw out a flag, and accompanied it with a general discharge of our firearms, while the men were in such spirits, and made such an active use of their paddles, that we arrived before the two men, whom we left here in the spring, could recover their sense to answer us. Thus we landed at four in the afternoon at the place which we left on May 9th. Here my voyages of discovery terminate. . . . I received, however, the reward of my labours, for they were crowned with success."

Mackenzie did not linger long at the Peace River fort, but hastened back to Fort Chipewyan, and the companionship of his cousin. He had been absent some eleven months in all, and passed the winter of 1793-4 in the solitudes of the north. Mackenzie's nervous system had been somewhat affected by the demands of the hard year of travel and anxiety. He made fitful attempts during the winter to write his journal, but the task was then too great for completion.

In the spring (1794) Alexander Mackenzie, now the successful leader of two great voyages, and the explorer of a vast region of new country, in fact, the first to make the north-west passage by land, journeyed down to Grand Portage, and turned his back upon the upper country (*pays d'en haut*), never to see it again.

CHAPTER X

FAME ACHIEVED AND THE EBBING TIDE

THE time of Alexander Mackenzie's retirement from the upper country became an era of trouble and excitement for the North-West Company. The old lion of Montreal, Simon McTavish, had always borne the reputation of a tyrannical and domineering leader. As years fell upon him he became more and more unpopular, and as he was the moving spirit at headquarters in Montreal, there was a wide-spread feeling that the interests of the wintering partners, as the leading traders throughout the north and west were called, were in jeopardy. The derisive nicknames *Le Marquis*, and *Le Premier*, applied to McTavish are indications of this feeling.

A corresponding spirit of confidence on the part of the winterers may be detected as gathering around Alexander Mackenzie. This no doubt partly arose from self-interest, and the feeling of animosity to Simon McTavish, but it was also a tribute to the ability and capacity of the explorer of the Mackenzie River and of the route to the Pacific Ocean. It was certainly remarkable that a young man of thirty-one, and one whose fur-trading experiences had been

mostly in the frozen north should thus rise so soon into prominence and influence. Yet so it was.

It was his duty now, having left the upper country, to take a leading part in the great annual gathering at Grand Portage. To this gathering McTavish rarely came. No doubt the presence of Mackenzie would serve as a rallying-point for discontent, as the young trader had belonged to the minor company, which had united with the greater in 1787. The desire to separate from the old company and be free of the intolerable control from Montreal showed itself at Grand Portage in 1795. Several traders left the old company and cast in their lot with "Forsyth, Richardson & Co.," the rival of *Le Premier*. Though Alexander Mackenzie could not extricate himself from the affairs of the old company, yet his sympathies were plainly with the discontented. If Simon McTavish was the impetuous Ajax, Mackenzie was Achilles sulking in his tent.

The new North-West Company perfected its organization in 1795-6, and gave great evidences of vigour and pluck. To Lake Superior, to the Red River, to the Assiniboine and Swan Rivers, and to far distant Athabaska, it brought back the memories of the fierce days of 1783, when Mackenzie made his great dash for the English River. The new company was called the X.Y. because the bales of the North-West Company being marked N.W., these were the next letters of the alphabet. Its work prospered, though it must be confessed that more heartburning

and unfair competition resulted; and greater use of strong drink, as an agency in dealing with the Indians, was made than ever before or since in the fur trade. With the sympathy, possibly with the hidden assistance of Alexander Mackenzie, the "Little Company" or X.Y.'s, undoubtedly made great headway, and, somewhat arrogantly, built their emporium at Grand Portage, in 1797, within half a mile of the chief establishment of the North-West Company.

At the annual gathering Alexander Mackenzie stated his intention of withdrawing from the old company. The utmost plainness of speech was indulged in by many present about *Le Marquis*, and much ill-feeling shown. Mackenzie proved firm in carrying out his intention, and, leaving the company, set sail for home. It was shortly before this time that he seems to have had an opportunity of coming within the shadow of the court of St. James having been chosen to be the travelling companion in Canada and the United States of Edward, Duke of Kent, the father of our late Queen Victoria. No doubt this gave him some claim to notice in England.

We have seen that in the year when Mackenzie returned from the Pacific coast expedition he sought to prepare the materials for giving to the world an account of his two great voyages. His cousin, Roderick McKenzie, had the pen of a ready writer, and it is generally believed that he gave him much help in preparing his journal. Others attach little importance to this suggestion, inasmuch as the

journal, being very much of the nature of a log, shows little literary merit. Going to England, arrangements were at once made for its publication.

The book[1] appeared in 1801, and obtained a very favourable reception. From the time of old John Hakluyt, the Puritan prebendary of St. Paul's Cathedral, who made a collection of English and other voyages, the English people have dearly loved books of travel. From the Earl of Selkirk's own lips we learn that it was this book which first called his attention to Rupert's Land, and led him to lay the foundation of his colony on the Red River.

A great tribute to Sir Alexander Mackenzie's work comes from an unexpected quarter. William Mackenzie, of Gairloch, an old friend of Sir Alexander, wrote in 1856 a very interesting letter to Sir Alexander's son, the heir of Avoch. It is given to me by the family, though it once before appeared in the appendix of one of R. M. Ballantyne's smaller works. It is as follows :—

"Leamington, May 24th, 1856.

"When in Stockholm in 1824, Lord Bloomfield, our minister there, did me the honour of presenting me to the king—Bernadotte, father of the present king of Sweden. At the king's special request the audience was a private one, and I was further especially requested to oblige by coming in my full

[1] *Voyages from Montreal on the River St. Lawrence, through the Continent of North America to the Frozen and Pacific Oceans: in the years 1789 and 1793.*

Highland dress. The audience lasted fully an hour. Such an interest did Napoleon's first and most fortunate marshal take in everything which was Highland, not even the skean dhu escaped him, etc., etc. I now come to your family portion of the audience.

"As we chatted on, (old Bernadotte, leaning upon my o'keachan, claymore) he was pleased to say, in that *suaviter in modo*, for which his eagle eye so fitted him, 'Yes, I repeat it—you Highlanders are deservedly proud of your country and your forefathers, and your people are a race apart, distinct from all the rest of Britain in high moral as well as martial bearing, and long, I hope, may you feel and show it outwardly by this noble distinction in dress. But allow me to observe, sir, that in your family name and in the name *Mackenzie* there is a very predominant lustre, which shall never be obliterated from my mind. Pray are you connected in any way with Sir Alexander Mackenzie, the celebrated North American traveller, whose name and researches are immortalized by his discoveries in the Arctic Ocean and of the river which since then does honour to his name?'

"I informed His Majesty that as a boy I had known him well, and that our families and his were nearly connected. This seemed to give me still greater favour with him, for familiarly putting his hand on my shoulder brooch, he replied that, *on that account alone*, his making my acquaintance gave him greater satisfaction. He then proceeded to tell Lord

Bloomfield and me how your father's name had become familiar to him and so much valued in his eyes.

"He said that at one time Napoleon had arranged to distract the affairs of Britain by attacking her in her Canadian possessions; not by a direct descent upon them, but by a route which would take England quite by surprise and prove infallible. That route was to be of the Mississippi, Ohio, etc., up to our Canadian border lakes. For this arrangements were to be made with America—New Orleans occupied as a *pied-à-terre* by France, etc.

"'The organization and command of this gigantic enterprise,' as Bernadotte said, 'was given to me by the Emperor with instructions to make myself master of any work which could bear upon it, and the facilities the nature of the country afforded. Foremost among these the work of your namesake (Sir Alexander Mackenzie) was recommended, but how to get at it, with all communication with England interdicted, all knowledge of English unknown to us, seemed a difficulty not easily to be got over. However, as every one knows, my then master, *L'Empereur*, was not the man to be overcome by such small difficulties. The book, a huge quarto, was procured through smugglers, and in an inconceivably short space of time most admirably translated into French for my especial use. I need hardly add with what interest I perused and reperused that admirable work till I had made myself so thoroughly

master of it that I could almost fancy myself (this he said laughing heartily) taking your Canada *en revers* from the upper waters, and ever since I have never ceased to look upon the home and think of the author with more than ordinary respect and esteem.'

"After a short pause and a long-drawn breath, almost amounting to a sigh, accompanied by a look at Bloomfield and a most expressive '*Ah, mi lord, que des changements depuis ces jours-là!*' Bernadotte concluded by saying that the Russian campaign had knocked that of Canada on the head until Russia was crushed, but it had pleased God to ordain it otherwise—'*et maintenant me voilà Roi de Suède*' (his exact words as he concluded these compliments to your father). So much for old recollections of my sunny days of youth.

"Yours faithfully,
"Wm. Mackenzie
"(Gairloch)

"To George Mackenzie, Esqre.,
"Avoch."

Miss Mackenzie, of Fortrose, the granddaughter of Sir Alexander, sends word to the writer:—"We have the French edition of Sir Alexander Mackenzie's travels, on which the following is written in an old hand, 'Napoleon's copy from St. Helena.' It is also stamped with the French eagle. This book contains an engraving of Lawrence's portrait of Sir Alexander, and also a map, showing his travels in

1789." This copy was sent to the Mackenzie family by an old friend from the continent.

Another notable circumstance in the life of the successful explorer was his acquaintance in Canada with the Duke of Kent, the father of our late Queen Victoria. The duke had, in 1792, and for a few years afterwards, been stationed in Canada and Nova Scotia, and becoming acquainted with Alexander Mackenzie had honoured him with his favour, and had afterwards kept up a correspondence with the fur trader. After coming to Britain Sir Alexander was further honoured in being at times a travelling companion of the duke.

Now that Alexander Mackenzie had become famous as the writer of so valuable and interesting an account of his voyages, and had the favour of one so high in the affairs of state as the Duke of Kent it was not surprising that the honour of knighthood should be conferred by the king on the modest and courageous explorer.

Honoured by royalty, appreciated by the English public, and, as we have seen, known upon the continent as a successful explorer who had written a history of the fur trade, we can readily imagine that on his visit to Montreal in the year after the publication of his work he was received with open arms by the citizens. The opponents of Simon McTavish, and all discontented souls were ready to welcome him as a rival to the heady old *Marquis*.

He was immediately put at the head of the **X.Y.**

Company, which he had formerly secretly aided, and which sometimes bore the name of the new North-West Company. His prestige and influence at this time may be seen in the fact that this company was very often spoken of as "Sir Alexander Mackenzie & Co." The vigour of the little company under the new leader stirred up the old "Emperor" at Montreal, and in 1802 he reorganized the North-West Company after a most marvellous fashion. He not only extended the agencies of the fur company to the South Saskatchewan and the Missouri, but also rented the "posts of the king," as the trading-stations on the lower St. Lawrence were called, and actually carried the war into Africa against the Hudson's Bay Company by establishing Nor'-West posts on Hudson Bay—a thing utterly unheard of in North-West Company annals.

The zeal inspired in the old company by its master mind was amazing, and no doubt the bold policy of *Le Marquis* would have come out victorious, but in 1804 Simon McTavish died, all his projects fell to the ground, the obstacles to union of the two Canadian companies were removed, and the breach, which had extended from 1796 to 1804, was healed. The intense rivalry now ended, the degrading methods of plying the Indians with strong drink were repressed, and an impulse to trade was given, as seen in the building of new forts, notably Fort Gibraltar, on the site of the present city of Winnipeg in the year after the union. The new fort at the mouth

of the Kaministiquia, built a year or two before this happy union, but never christened, was now Fort William, named after the Hon. William McGillivray, a noted man in the old company.

Sir Alexander Mackenzie was not only a leader in the fur trade, but his abilities called for his recognition in the public affairs of Lower Canada. He was chosen representative in the legislative assembly by the English-speaking county of Huntingdon; but parliamentary affairs were not to his taste, and he soon resigned his new honours and position, and in 1808 returned to Scotland to take up his abode there, and spend his remaining years, though he had only reached the age of forty-five.

The old trader, although retired from the atmosphere of beaver and pelts, still took an interest in the fur trade. In the year 1811 Lord Selkirk, a British nobleman, undertook his scheme of emigration to the banks of the Red River, and in order to do so purchased a large quantity of stock in the Hudson's Bay Company. This scheme was strenuously opposed by Sir Alexander Mackenzie, who had purchased a sufficient quantity of the stock to take part in the company's affairs. When the first ship with Lord Selkirk's emigrants was leaving Stornoway for America, it is stated by Miles Macdonell, the commander, that strong and unfair opposition was offered to the departure of the colonists. Mr. Reid, collector of customs at Stornoway, did all in his power to thwart the emigration movement by

sowing discontent in the minds of the settlers. Inasmuch as the collector's wife was an aunt of Sir Alexander Mackenzie, it was natural that it should be said that this opposition was inspired by the retired explorer himself.

In the year after this affair (1812) Sir Alexander's marriage took place. Geddes Mackenzie, who became his wife, was one of the most beautiful and gifted of Scottish women. She was of the blood of the clan whose name she bore:

> "McKenneth, great Earl of the North,
> The Lord of Loch Carron, Glensheil and Seaforth,"

and was a true scion of the clan whose leader fought for James IV at Flodden, Queen Mary at Langside, and James II, who created Mackenzie Marquis of Seaforth and Earl of Mar in 1715. This clan raised the 72nd and 78th Highland regiments. Geddes Mackenzie's grandfather was Captain John Mackenzie of Castle Leod, who married his cousin, and purchased the property of Avoch in Inverness-shire; her father was George, a prosperous merchant of London, and he was the last Mackenzie of Gruinard. She was also a close relative of the Mackenzies of Gairloch.

Miss Geddes Mackenzie brought with her the property of Avoch in her own right, and this was after their marriage transferred to Sir Alexander. To them there were born two sons and one daughter. The eldest was Alexander George, born February 14th, 1818, and the daughter bore her mother's name,

Geddes. Alexander George was the father of the present George Mackenzie, of London, of Alexander Isabel and Geddes Margaret, unmarried sisters, who live at the Deanery, Fortrose, and two other sons.

After his marriage Sir Alexander took much interest in agriculture in the neighbourhood of his property, and his grandson says: "On his return to Avoch he carried out many real improvements in the neighbourhood, building the wall which now protects the road between Avoch and Fortrose from the sea, and laying down an oyster bed in the Bay of Munlochy, which was worked successfully for many years."

Very unexpectedly, on March 12th, 1820, Sir Alexander Mackenzie died. Returning home from a journey to London he was taken ill in the coach at Mulnain in Perthshire, and died there. The body was taken on to Avoch, and buried in the family enclosure in the churchyard.

Thus suddenly his career was closed at the age of fifty-seven. His wife survived him forty years.

CHAPTER XI

THE GREAT EXPLORER'S IMPULSE

SIR ALEXANDER MACKENZIE did two great things in reaching the Arctic Sea and the Pacific Ocean by new routes, but the greatest thing he did was giving an impulse to other explorers. Vast portions of the northern half of North America were yet unknown, when he followed the two routes which were simply length without breadth. Other traders were encouraged by his successes to open up new regions. Seven years before the end of the eighteenth century Alexander Mackenzie reached the Pacific Ocean. Two years afterwards David Thompson, a youth educated at the Bluecoat School in London, and well versed in mathematics and astronomy, with three companions, found his way from Hudson Bay to Lake Athabaska. Returning to York Factory from the very lake which Alexander Mackenzie had passed on both his expeditions, Thompson reported in favour of prosecuting explorations further west for the Hudson's Bay Company. His request was refused, whereupon the enthusiastic explorer betook himself at once to Grand Portage, and offered himself to the North-West Company. He was immediately appointed astronomer and surveyor by the Montreal

traders. That choice was one of the wisest the Nor'-Westers ever made.

Shortly after his appointment in 1796 Thompson joined himself to one of the northern canoe brigades, and with his instruments began at once to establish the latitude and longitude of the several posts. Following the fur traders' route he arrived at Lake Winnipeg House at the mouth of the Winnipeg River, coasted around Lake Winnipeg, and, leaving it, ascended a small river and crossed to the Swan River district. Reaching at this point the traders' paradise, and the rich prairies of the west, Thompson turned southward, and gained the plains where the buffalo herds were met. Here among beaver-meadows Thompson wintered.

The summer having come, with its good roads and blossoming prairies, the explorer followed the course of the Assiniboine River, and found comfortable quarters at Assiniboine House, near the entrance of the Souris River into the river he was descending.

From this point Thompson made his famous journey to the Mandans on the Missouri River, following the course, to a large extent, of the younger Vérendrye as described by Parkman. The journey was made in the winter time over a treeless plain; the distance was two hundred and eighty miles—thirty-three days of travelling under low temperatures—and was performed with a few horses, and numerous dog teams. At all important places on his route the

astronomer made his observations and gained the material for the important map which he afterwards constructed.

Going eastward down the Assiniboine early in 1798 Thompson reached the site of the present city of Winnipeg, and found no fort or dwelling. He then ascended the Red River, and came to Pembina House, where he took observations to establish the forty-ninth parallel of latitude—the boundary between Rupert's Land and the United States.

Now going southward the energetic explorer determined to settle the debatable question of the source of the Mississippi, near which were several forts belonging to the Nor'-Westers. He decided Turtle Lake to be the source of the Father of Waters, but in this he was wrong, as the true source was declared a generation afterwards to be Lake Itasca, which is half a degree south of Turtle Lake. After fixing the position of the several posts, Thompson then went eastward to Lake Superior, and coasting along its north shore with difficulty reached Grand Portage, whence he had departed three years before, and where the account of his work was received with the highest praise by the Nor'-Westers. He was regarded as a born explorer, upon whom the mantle of Alexander Mackenzie had fallen.

Thompson threw himself into his work with vigour, but it was not until 1805 that the plans which Alexander Mackenzie and others had made

were carried out with great energy. The particular event that led to determined action was the union of the smaller company, which, as already said, was often known as "Sir Alexander Mackenzie & Co.," with the North-West Company.

The united company, seeking new worlds to conquer for the fur trade, sent David Thompson up the Saskatchewan to explore the Columbia River, and examine the vast "sea of mountains" bordering on the Pacific Ocean. The other partner chosen was Simon Fraser, and his orders were to go up the Peace River, cross the Rockies, and explore the region from the northern side.

In 1806 Thompson crossed the Rocky Mountains, and built, in the following year, a trading-house for the North-West Company on the lower Columbia River. With strange determination he persisted in calling this river the Kootenay. For several years he passed to and fro from the Kootenay region to the other side of the mountains, reaching, at times, Grand Portage.

The presence of the Astor Fur Company at the mouth of the Columbia River was regarded as a menace by the Nor'-Westers. Thompson received orders to checkmate the Astorians by descending the Columbia River, and occupying the point where this river empties into the Pacific Ocean. Accordingly in the summer of 1811 the explorer started to descend the Columbia River, which no white man had yet done. The American explorers, Lewis and

Clark, had, in 1805, crossed the Rocky Mountains further south, and by way of the Lewis River had come upon the lower part of the Columbia River, and followed it to the sea. This, together with the proposed occupation of the mouth of the river by Astor, was what led to Thompson's present expedition. Proceeding down the Columbia, Thompson took formal possession of it, at the junction of the Spokane and Columbia, here, as well as at other points, erecting poles with notices upon them claiming the country for Britain.

In July, 1811, after various delays from mutinies and other obstacles, Thompson reached the mouth of the Columbia River, but was chagrined to find that the Astor expedition had arrived by way of Cape Horn, and taken possession of the coveted territory. Thompson philosophically accepted the situation, but, reascending the river, established two posts at what he considered good objective points. In the following year David Thompson definitely left the service of the North-West Company, and spent the remainder of his life, which was a long one, chiefly in government employment. In the year after his return from western exploration Thompson prepared a great map of the country, which, for a number of years, adorned the banqueting hall of the *bourgeois* at Fort William, and is now in the Government Buildings at Toronto.

Returning now to Simon Fraser, who had been appointed by the fur traders to explore the district

of New Caledonia, we find that in 1806 he crossed the Rocky Mountains, and came upon a river which he called Stuart River, in honour of his able lieutenant, John Stuart. On this river Fraser built a fort, which, with Scottish fervour, he called New Caledonia, and this seems to have led to the whole of the northern region west of the Rocky Mountains receiving the name of New Caledonia. Fraser had been asked by the Nor'-Westers to descend the Tacouche Tessé River, down which it will be remembered Alexander Mackenzie had gone for some distance, till he left it to take a western road to the Pacific Ocean. The general opinion was that the Tacouche Tessé was simply the upper Columbia, and that, descending it, Fraser would reach Thompson, who had gone across the mountains to the Columbia farther south. Fraser's orders to advance had been brought to him by two traders, Jules Maurice Quesnel and Hugh Faries.

Leaving Faries in charge at the new fort, Fraser, with two able assistants, Stuart and Quesnel, nineteen *voyageurs* and two Indian guides in four canoes, left the mouth of Stuart River, and proceeded down the Tacouche Tessé River on one of the most notable and dangerous voyages ever attempted. We cannot undertake to give even a summary of the account of the journey down the river, where a succession of rapids, overhung by enormous heights of perpendicular rocks, made it almost as difficult to portage as it would have been to risk the passage of the

canoes and their loads down the boiling caldron of the river.

Let it suffice to quote a few words from Fraser's journal: "I have been for a long period among the Rocky Mountains, but have never seen anything like this country. It is so wild that I cannot find words to describe our situation at times. We had to pass where no human being should venture; yet in those places there is a regular footpath impressed, or rather indented upon the very rocks by frequent travelling. Besides this, steps which are formed like a ladder by poles hanging to one another, crossed at certain distances with twigs, the whole suspended from the top, furnish a safe and convenient passage to the natives down these precipices; but we, who had not had the advantage of their education and experience, were often in imminent danger, when obliged to follow their example."

As the party proceeded down the river they saw a great river flowing in from the left, making notable forks. Thinking that probably Thompson's expedition by way of the Saskatchewan might at that very time be on the upper waters of this tributary they called it Thompson River. In this they were mistaken, but it has ever since borne the name Thompson as one of the rivers of British Columbia. Another river, flowing into the Tacouche Tessé from the east, was called, in honour of the second *bourgeois* of the expedition, the Quesnel, and this name has ever since been retained.

On July 2nd the party reached an arm of the sea, and saw the tide ebbing and flowing. They knew their journey had now practically ended, but they were not allowed to visit the desired destination. The Indians were so hostile that Fraser could not pass down to the mouth. He, however, was near enough to take the latitude, and found that it was some degrees north of the Columbia, whose latitude was known to him. He had discovered a new river. How hard is it to determine the relative value of human achievement! This river was to be called for all time the Fraser River, and yet the explorer did not grasp the magnitude of the discovery he had made and of the fame which was his. His ascent of the river proved a less difficult task than his journey down had been, taking nine days less.

These great discoveries were the last made for some time by the fur companies. One reason of this was that the pioneer discoverer, Alexander Mackenzie, retired from the active service of the company, and took up, as we have seen, his residence in Britain. Another, perhaps stronger reason for the abrupt cessation of exploration is found in the troubles that beset the companies, and the dangerous conflicts that took place in different parts of the fur country after the project of Lord Selkirk to found his colony on the banks of the Red River in 1811, under the auspices of the Hudson's Bay Company.

It was not for more than a decade after this, when peace had been restored, that Finlay proceeded up the branches of the Peace River, and even later still that Robert Campbell ascended the Liard River, and, crossing the height of land, discovered the upper Yukon.

Enough has been said, however, to show how the example and influence of Alexander Mackenzie resulted in the wider exploration of even the most dangerous and inaccessible parts of the Rocky Mountains, and to call attention to the honour to which he is entitled as the pioneer in the line of discovery.

Selkirk

LORD SELKIRK

CHAPTER I

A YOUTHFUL PHILOSOPHER

THE name and titles of the Earl of Selkirk are firmly attached to a number of localities in the Canadian West: a town and county of Manitoba, a range of mountains in British Columbia, a fort on the Yukon River, and an island in Lake Winnipeg, all bear the name of Selkirk; a part of the city of Winnipeg called Point Douglas, where originally stood Fort Douglas, preserves to this day the family name of the great colonizer. The ruins of a fort near the international boundary, known as Fort Daer, long remained to recall one of the titles of the noble house of Selkirk.

The man who thus impressed himself upon so vast a region was no common man, and the story of his life is worthy of a place in the treasure-house of Canadian and British worthies.

Thomas Douglas, fifth Earl of Selkirk, Baron Daer and Shortcleugh, was a scion of one of the oldest Scottish noble families. As the writer has said elsewhere, "The intrepidity of the Douglases, the perseverance of the ancient family of Marr, and the venturesomeness of the house of Angus, were all his inheritance by blood. Back nineteen generations, and not less than seven hundred years be-

fore his time, Theobald, the Fleming—the Selkirk ancestor—scorned the quieter pleasures of home, and went to seek his fortunes among the Saxon people of old Northumbria, bought himself a new home with the sword, and the lands of Douglas were granted him because he had won them honourably."

Time does not permit to tell the deeds of Theobald's great grandson, Sir William Douglas, the hardy man who joined the unlucky Wallace, and suffered death for it, and of Sir William's grandson, the grim Sir Archibald. James, the second earl of Douglas, who fell fighting against the Percy, was the brave hero of the battle of Otterburn. It was his dying boast that "few of his ancestors had died in chambers." Good Sir James Douglas lived in the days of the Bruce, distinguished himself at Bannockburn, and figured in the attempt to carry the heart of King Robert to Jerusalem. These might suffice for a group of ancestors of remarkable distinction, but there was also that other famous man, Archibald, "Bell the Cat," the Earl of Angus, whose courage and resource have become watchwords in history.

With such heroic blood in his veins our great colonizer was born, being the seventh son of Dunbar, fourth Earl of Selkirk. He was born in June, 1771, at St. Mary's Isle, the earl's seat at the mouth of the Dee in Kirkcudbrightshire, Scotland. At the age of fifteen young Thomas Douglas

went to the University of Edinburgh, and there pursued his studies till he was nineteen. His college days gave promise of an energy, resourcefulness, and ability which were to urge him to great achievements in his later days. With Walter Scott he was a member of "The Club," a small society of ardent literary spirits. The earl, young Thomas's father, was a broad-minded man, who showed favour to rising genius, and patronized Robert Burns. It was at St. Mary's Isle that Burns, on being entertained, extemporized the well-known "Selkirk Grace" found in his poems.

On another occasion the poet Burns, a guest at Ayr of Dugald Stewart, the great metaphysician, there met Lord Daer, an older brother of Thomas Douglas, and was so captivated by him that he wrote a poem concerning him, in which he says:—

> "Nae honest, worthy man need care
> To meet with noble, youthful Daer,
> For he but meets a brother."

Amongst the companions of Thomas Douglas in the little club of nineteen in Edinburgh were men afterwards greatly distinguished: William Clerk, of Eldin, Sir A. Ferguson, Lord Abercromby, and David Douglas, afterwards Lord Reston.

At the close of his college career, the young nobleman, who had a great sympathy for the downtrodden and oppressed, found his way to France, and was disposed, like many British Liberals, to extend his approbation to the leaders of the French

Revolution. It may be of interest to give here a letter written by him to his father, the Earl of Selkirk.

"DEAR FATHER,—We are all here very quiet, tho' your newspapers have probably by this time massacred half of Paris. The disturbance of which Daer gave you an account is completely settled. The measure M. de la Fayette took of breaking one of the mutinous companies of the Garde Soldée was indeed much criticized in the Groupes of the Palais Royal, but the ferment is blown over, and will probably be put out of their heads by the Avignon business. I was at the National Assembly the whole three days they discussed it (one of which they sat 12 hours). It is carried by a great majority that they are not to unite it at once to France as the Jacobins wished.

"I have no more time as the post is just going.

"Yours,

"THOMAS DOUGLAS."

On his return from France young Thomas Douglas went, as seems to have been his custom during his college course, to spend his summer in the Highland straths and valleys. He had become extremely fond of the Highland people, and although a Southron learned the Gaelic language.

In 1797, on the death of his brother, Lord Daer, young Douglas, who was then the sole survivor of the family of seven sons, was made Baron Daer

and Shortcleugh, and two years afterwards, on the death of his father, he became Earl of Selkirk. His youthful enthusiasm was now, at the age of twenty-eight, very great, and the wealth and influence placed at his disposal as a British earl turned his thoughts to benevolent and noble projects.

It was now the beginning of the nineteenth century, and all the accounts of that period agree in saying that there was great distress among the British people.

The sympathetic heart of the philanthropic young man had been touched by the sufferings of his Highland countrymen. The Napoleonic wars had been especially hard upon the Highlands, but an economic wrong also set on fire the Highland heart. Men can be found in Canada to-day whose indignation rises when the "Highland Clearances" of the early years of the nineteenth century are mentioned. The "Clearances" were the result of a policy adopted by the great landholders of the north of Scotland to diminish the large number of small crofts or holdings, and to make wide sheep runs for rental to a few proprietors, who with larger capital might better develop the resources of their estates. This policy could not fail to bear heavily upon the poor. The Highlander has a passionate attachment to his native hills, and his shielan, poor as it is, is his home. In the lament of the Highlanders, it was said in their Gaelic idiom that "a hundred smokes went up one chimney," meaning

that only one house now stood where a hundred had formerly been seen.

The heart of the young earl was deeply touched, and he forthwith laid plans for a systematic emigration policy which should bring relief to his unfortunate countrymen, and to the suffering people of the neighbouring island of Ireland. Our next chapter will treat in greater detail of the earl's schemes of emigration; suffice it now to say that these are embodied in his most elaborate work on emigration,[1] to which we shall again refer.

There seems to have been a spirit of marvellous enterprise in Lord Selkirk which expressed itself in plans and projects of improvement, and in discussion of public affairs of the greatest moment. To a patriotic Briton the first decade of the nineteenth century gave abundant cause for anxiety. Napoleon, with "Europe-shadowing wings," threatened at any moment to swoop down on the British Isles. The attempt of the French fleet to land at Bantry Bay in Ireland in 1796 had been trifling enough, but now Napoleon's added allies made him far more formidable. Accordingly Lord Selkirk in his place in the House of Lords, in 1807, laid before his fellow-legislators a plan of defence for the empire. "Every young man," said he, "between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five, throughout Great Britain, should be enrolled and completely trained

[1] *Observations on the Present State of the Highlands of Scotland, with a View of the Causes and Probable Consequences of Emigration.* London, 1805.

to military discipline." His Lordship estimated that of the population of Great Britain and Ireland, then put down as about eleven million, upwards of six hundred thousand were between the ages named and eligible for this purpose. The training would proceed in succession. For three months officers would train one-fourth of those within their districts; and so on with the second quarter, till all would have secured twelve weeks drill in the year. Once a year a general assemblage would take place at a fixed time, and the trained men be kept in form by the drill required. With due regard to the interests of the agriculturists, the beginning of summer would be selected as the time of general assemblage.

This remarkable scheme was developed with a minuteness of detail and a clearness of statement quite wonderful in a man not trained to military affairs. It is a tribute to his acuteness, and to his grasp and foresight, that the main points of the plan he outlined are now in force throughout a great portion of Europe.

In the following year the earl developed his ideas on this subject in a brochure of some eighty pages, bearing the title, "On the Necessity of a more Effectual System of National Defence." In publishing this work Lord Selkirk had the assistance of his kinsman, Sir John Wedderburn, afterwards of the East India Service. It is interesting to note that in republishing this work more than

fifty years afterwards, Sir John could do so, finding it strikingly applicable to the conditions then prevailing.

Sir John, in referring to the Earl of Selkirk, calls him "a remarkable man, who had the misfortune to live before his time." While this may refer to the trials which afterwards overtook Lord Selkirk, we question very much whether His Lordship's schemes were as chimerical and ill-considered as this statement would imply.

This period of Lord Selkirk's life was certainly one of great activity. After his publication of his scheme of defence, he was made a Fellow of the Royal Society, and it was perhaps this circumstance which stimulated his literary activity. In any event we are justified in attributing to him two anonymous works which anticipate his later acknowledged views as contained in his "Sketch of the British Fur Trade in 1806." In these two books, "Observations on a Proposal for forming a Society for the Civilization and Improvement of the North American Indians within the British Boundary" (1807), and "On the Civilization of the Indian in British America" (no date), the author advocates the establishment of schools in which young Indians might be instructed, not only in ordinary branches, but also in industrial pursuits. He would have had certain portions of the country set apart for the Indians alone, he would have had the "legislature applied to for an Act to authorize

the governor of Canada to fix by proclamation the limits of the country reserved for the use of the Indian nations," and he would have secured the total suppression of the liquor traffic, whose ravages among the Indians he describes in startling colours.

We read these details with surprise, for we see them all embodied in the Reserve System, the Industrial Schools, and the law making it illegal to give or sell strong drink to an Indian, in fact, in the main features of the policy carried out so successfully in Western Canada during the last twenty-five years of the nineteenth century. It is unjust to contend that the propounder of such practical ideas lived before his time.

In 1809 Lord Selkirk succeeded in gaining the attention of the public men of his time in a pamphlet published by him, entitled "Parliamentary Reform," which he addressed to the chairman of the committee at the "Crown and Anchor," presumably a Whig organization. The house of Selkirk was Whig, or Liberal, in its views. This may be seen by any one who reads the work mentioned on emigration. The expansive and altruistic spirit shown in the work was quite in harmony with the large-hearted and sympathetic views which we attribute to the writer. But as every student of political science knows, the excesses of the French Revolution, the rancour of political parties, and the evident discontent in the United States that followed the

first generation of democratic rule, chilled the ardour of lovers of liberty in all lands about the beginning of the nineteenth century. Men like Coleridge and Wordsworth, who had looked to the French Revolution to break the chains of tyranny, not only in France but for the whole world, saw with dismay the terrorism of a mob replaced by a great military despotism, and they shuddered at and forsook principles they had formerly advocated.

So with Lord Selkirk. He states to the men of the "Crown and Anchor" that his father and brother had been zealous friends of a parliamentary reform, and that all his early impressions were in favour of such a measure. "He had thought," he says, "that if the representation were equalized, the right of suffrage extended, the duration of parliaments shortened, bribery could scarcely be applied with effect." "But," says he, "I have had an opportunity (in the French Revolution and in a visit to America) which my family never had of seeing the political application of those principles from which we expected consequences so beneficial. With grief and mortification I perceived that no such advantages had resulted as formerly I had been led to anticipate." Lord Selkirk accordingly refused to take part in the proposed agitation, and, indeed, went further and threw in his lot with the reactionary party.

We have thus sought to give a picture of the mental characteristics of this public-spirited philan-

thropist. He was mentally most acute and active, indeed his mind burned itself out in activities and projects that to some seemed visionary. But he was a man of deep thought and large heart. As we look upon the marble bust chiselled by Sir Francis Chantrey, the great English sculptor, now at St. Mary's Isle, we see the indications of intellectual fineness and keenness of mind, as well as of a generous and pitiful heart.

Author, patriot, colonizer, and philanthropist—his enthusiastic devotion to his projects possesses us, and we seem to see the "tall, spare man, full six feet high, with a pleasant countenance," as he came to Helmsdale to bid the Highland emigrants to his colony farewell; as he afterwards stood on the banks of the Red River and apportioned his colonists their lots; as he dealt with the bands of Indians of the West, who sealed a perpetual covenant with him whom they named their "Silver Chief." We shall follow him with interest through the many phases of his eventful though somewhat sorrowful life.

CHAPTER II

FIRST EXPERIMENTS IN EMIGRATION

IN the very year that Wordsworth penned his sonnet of lament for England, and gave forth his cry for help for the British people, Lord Selkirk was deep in contemplation as to how he might relieve their necessities. To him emigration seemed the remedy. He had just read Sir Alexander Mackenzie's journal, and had heard of the district of Red River as being fertile and affording room for a large population. The plan flashed into his mind of being the leader in a pioneer movement of settlement for Rupert's Land which would relieve the distress of crofter, farm labourer, and operative alike, and restore the equilibrium disturbed by war and other disasters.

Accordingly His Lordship, on April 4th, 1802, sent to Lord Pelham, home secretary, a letter and memorial. This has never been published, but through the kindness of the Earl of Kimberley when he was colonial secretary some years ago, a copy was furnished to the writer.

In these documents Lord Selkirk says: "No tract of land remains unoccupied on the sea-coast of British America, except barren and frozen deserts. To find a sufficient extent of good soil in

a temperate climate we must go far inland. This inconvenience is not, however, an insurmountable obstacle to the prosperity of a colony, and appears to be amply compensated by other advantages that are to be found in some remote parts of British territory. At the western extremity of Canada, upon the waters which fall into Lake Winnipeg, and, uniting with the great river of Port Nelson, discharge themselves into Hudson Bay, is a country which the Indian traders represent as fertile, and of a climate far more temperate than the shores of the Atlantic under the same parallel, and not more severe than that of Germany and Poland. Here, therefore, the colonists may, with a moderate exertion of industry, be certain of a comfortable subsistence, and they may also raise some valuable objects of exportation. . . . Some of the British traders have extended their discoveries into a climate which appears well adapted even for the vine, the successful cultivation of which would save immense sums that go every year from this kingdom into the hands of its enemies. To a colony in these territories the channel of trade must be the river of Port Nelson."

Here is the genesis of Lord Selkirk's emigration movement almost a decade before he organized his expedition to enter upon the land to be reached by way of Nelson River. Lord Buckinghamshire, the colonial secretary, did not favour the scheme, "the prejudices of the British people were so strong

against emigration." This is not to be wondered at. Britain was engaged in a great war in which her very existence was at stake. Surely it would be folly to weaken her supply of men. Lord Selkirk, in his book published three years after this letter, combats the arguments against emigration. He especially falls foul of the Highland Society, which had strenuously opposed the removal of the Highlanders from their lands to the New World.

Lord Selkirk was, however, impressed with the thought of relieving suffering, and, in 1803, had organized and carried out his first emigration party. Forbidden by the British government to begin a colony six hundred miles inland from Hudson Bay, on the shores of Lake Winnipeg, he was compelled to content himself with a strip of land on the coast of Prince Edward Island, on the Gulf of St. Lawrence, which could be reached by ship.

In his work on emigration a good account is given of this colony. The unoccupied land extended, on the east coast of Prince Edward Island, for some thirty miles. "Separated by an arm of the sea from any other settlement," he says, "the emigrants . . were placed in circumstances scarcely more favourable than if the island had been completely desert."

Lord Selkirk had intended himself to precede the colonists, and to oversee the preparations made for their reception. This he was unable to do. Eight hundred persons, the greater proportion of whom

were from the Isle of Skye, and a number from each of the shires of Ross, Argyle, and Inverness, with a few from the Island of Uist, made up this pioneer party. They sailed from the British Isles in three ships, and arrived respectively on the 7th, 9th, and 27th August, 1803. On Lord Selkirk's reaching Charlottetown, the capital of the island, he found that the third ship had just arrived, and that the settlers had debarked from the other vessels in the district selected for them.

The selected region had been cleared by the French, who had been driven out in the year before the taking of Quebec, and in the lapse of forty years thickets of young trees had grown up, interspered with grassy glades. This afforded a suitable region for encampment and settlement. The settlers had, in the openings, built for each family a hut of poles, which they had covered over with spruce branches, and in these they were fairly comfortable. The camp had a strange appearance; confused heaps of baggage were everywhere piled up beside the huts; the fires built at night in the open spaces gave a weird appearance to the scene. Lord Selkirk had his tent pitched at the end of the camp, and all seemed to feel that the happy days of clanship were back again, and that the "Clearances" were a thing of the past.

The usual difficulties were experienced. The land was not well surveyed, each family was impatient, and indeed somewhat jealous as to the spot which

should be assigned to it. Certain measurements were absolutely necessary. This took time. Discontent began to arise. Visitors came from the English settlements of the island and started doubts by their advice, and at one time the settlement was nearly broken up. Food rose in price to a high figure, and flour had to be brought from Nova Scotia. Scarcity of food, exposure, and a new climate brought their inevitable consequences, and a contagious fever broke out among the settlers. Fortunately Lord Selkirk had brought with him a competent and clever physician, and through his exertions very few fatal cases occurred.

At the end of three or four weeks from the time of Lord Selkirk's arrival all the allocations had been made, and the land sold at a moderate price —less than one half the price current on the island; the fever had begun to abate; and provisions became more plentiful by their importation from abroad by Lord Selkirk's agent. The narrator says: "From the moment the settlers were fixed in their respective allotments of land they were enabled to proceed without interruption in their work."

The zeal of the settlers is recorded to have been remarkable. A father and three sons occupied one lot; the father, sixty years of age, insisted on being an axeman; the sons had no resource but to hide the axe, and the aged woodman spared the tree for the best of reasons. An elderly widow and her two sons had taken a claim; the young men being

absent from home, the octogenarian matron seized the axe and undertook to fell a tree; the return of her sons stopped her well-meant efforts in time to prevent the tumbling monarch of the forest from crushing to the earth their humble dwelling.

The settlement continued to thrive; the people gained courage; they began to love their new home, and two years after their arrival Lord Selkirk says, speaking of the general improvement, "One of very moderate property, who had a small possession in the Isle of Skye, traces his lineage to a family which had once possessed an estate in Rossshire, but had lost it in the turbulence of the feudal times. He has given to his new property the name of the ancient seat of his family, has selected a situation with more taste than might have been expected from a mere peasant; and to render the house of Auchtertyre worthy of its name, is doing more than would otherwise have been expected from a man of his station."

Thus the colony prospered. Probably not less than four thousand people on the island trace their origin to the three shiploads of 1803, while many in different parts of the Canadian West call themselves Lord Selkirk's islanders.

As soon as Lord Selkirk had seen his colonists fairly settled, he visited the United States and Canada. His active mind was taken up with the problems he saw being worked out in the New World, and his patriotic feeling was roused in favour

of the British dependency of Canada. In the United States he found numbers of "families from Scotland and Wales in New England and in the state of New York," who were willing to remove to Canada if favourable terms could be obtained.

Becoming acquainted with the leading men in Montreal and Toronto, Lord Selkirk, with surprising alertness and courage, undertook several large schemes of emigration and development. He purchased a tract of land in the townships of Dover and Chatham, in the western part of Upper Canada near Lake St. Clair. Some twenty families of his Highland colonists from Prince Edward Island were, under the management of Alexander Macdonell, Sheriff of the Home District, placed on these lands and the name of one of his properties—Baldoon—was given to the settlement. A road known as Baldoon Street was cut through to the town of Chatham on the river Thames. Baldoon being situated in a swampy district, did not thrive; the settlers suffered from the fever and ague prevalent in the locality, and afterwards in the War of 1812 had various losses.

From a bundle of papers found in the archives of the Selkirk family, which the writer had the opportunity of perusing, a glimpse of the Earl of Selkirk's energy and determination may be seen. Observing the obstacles to settlement and improvement arising from the want of communication through the country, Lord Selkirk, in 1804, pro-

posed to the government of Upper Canada the building of a main highway from Amherstburg to York (Toronto), a distance of nearly three hundred miles. The cost of this was estimated at £40,000 sterling, and as the province was poor and weak the earl offered Governor Hunter to provide the money required and to accept payment in wild lands on each side of the road when constructed. To those who were familiar with the fearful roads of the western peninsula of Upper Canada even fifty years after this date, the proposal of Lord Selkirk will appear to have been one of great value. The executive council, however, over-estimating the value of the lands, regarded Lord Selkirk's terms as too high and rejected them.

Writing from London, England, in 1805, the Earl of Selkirk proposed to take and settle one of the Indian townships lying near the mouth of the Grand River in Upper Canada. The township of Moulton, valued at between £3,000 and £4,000, seems to have been in the hands of the Earl of Selkirk for a time, but like Baldoon, it was marshy, and so proved unsuitable for immediate settlement, though in later times, after drainage, it proved to be a valuable township.

Undoubtedly Lord Selkirk's experiments in emigration were bravely undertaken, and showed evidence of organizing ability, but they proved unremunerative, as almost all early movements of the kind have done. To-day thriving communities

represent the Prince Edward Island, Baldoon and Moulton settlements. They were the first attempts of one who was yet to take a much higher and wider flight. They but served to make definite and absorbing an ambition which was to become the dominating passion of his life.

CHAPTER III

A DREAM OF EMPIRE

LORD SELKIRK'S first visit to Montreal in 1803 was a notable event. As already mentioned, having seen his body of Scottish emigrants settled in Prince Edward Island he crossed to the United States to examine the problem of settlement in the republic. Here he was distressed to see his countrymen living under a foreign flag, and absorbing the spirit hostile to the mother country so largely prevailing at that time among the first generation of Americans. The thought came to his mind of endeavouring to counterwork this loss to the empire. He was, as we have seen, a man not easily overcome by difficulties, and he bethought himself of the plan already described of founding settlements in Upper Canada and inducing British subjects in the United States to come to these. Some of the Baldoon settlers were actually of this class.

Montreal was at this time the centre of commercial life for Canada. The open mind of the imaginative earl was greatly impressed by what he saw there. He saw his own countrymen, the McTavishes, Mackenzies, McGillivrays, Camerons, and the rest, the magnates of the fur trade and leaders in the public life of Lower Canada. He saw at Ste. Anne and Lachine the arrival and departure of the *voya-*

geurs in their canoes, going and coming over a route hundreds of miles long to Grand Portage, the dépôt on Lake Superior, and this but the introduction to a course thousands of miles further inland to far distant Athabaska. There was a sense of mystery connected with the many Indian tribes of which he heard, and a romantic inspiration in the conception of the rapids and waterfalls and portages of the little-known journey, and in the spectacle of a few hundreds of white men governing a region without law or military force, or even a respectable show of numbers at any one point. All this appealed strongly to the mind of a man of Selkirk's temperament. The impression made upon him was similar to that expressed by Washington Irving in the opening chapter of "Astoria," in which that writer speaks in his now well-known phrase of the "Lords of the North."

The reception given the noble earl by the successful traders of Montreal was distinctly cordial and enthusiastic. His rank, his open-mindedness, and his successful achievement in settling his and their countrymen in Prince Edward Island were well known to them. Masson says of his arrival: "Lord Selkirk was received with open arms in Montreal. His reputation had preceded him, and all regarded it as an honour to be allowed to entertain him. The *bourgeois* of the North-West Company, who held the highest place in the English society of Montreal, and among whom the Scottish

element predominated, were the first to offer him the abundant hospitality for which they were distinguished."

The embodiment of the fur traders' pride and position was the Beaver Club of Montreal. It had been founded some twenty years before Lord Selkirk's visit with less than twenty members, and could only receive new members from officers who had endured the hardships of the interior of the fur traders' country. The appointments of their club house were notable. On their tables silver and glassware, of a kind unknown elsewhere in Canada, shone with resplendent light at their feasts. Each member on such occasions wore an elaborate gold medal bearing the motto, "Fortitude in distress." Bear, beaver, pemmican, and venison were served in the fashion of the Posts, song and dance gave entertainment during the evening, and when wine brought exhilaration in the early morning hours, partners, factors, and traders, in the sight of all the servants or *voyageurs* who happened to gain admittance, engaged in the "*grand voyage*" which consisted in all seating themselves in a row on the rich carpet, each armed with tongs, poker, sword, or walking stick to serve as paddle, and in boisterous manner singing a *voyageur's* song, "Malbrouck" or "A la Claire Fontaine," while they paddled as regularly as the excited state of their nerves would allow.

Some parts of the proceedings did not meet the

taste of the philosophic and high-minded earl, but the motto "*in vino veritas*" came to his mind, and he was given a great opportunity of learning the spirit, objects, and even details of the fur trade which he could have obtained in no other way.

It is stated by Masson that several of the *bourgeois* were suspicious while others were surprised at the persistence with which Lord Selkirk pursued his researches and investigations into the affairs of the fur trade. It has often been stated by the advocates of the case of the Nor'-Westers in the subsequent troubles of the fur trade, that Lord Selkirk played an unworthy part in obtaining detailed information about the fur trade, which he used to the disadvantage of the Montreal company in after years. It has even been said that Lord Selkirk returned to England completely decided to take advantage of the information that he had thus obtained.

We can see no ground for believing this to have been the case. Lord Selkirk's attention arose from the same disposition that led him to interest himself in the poor of his own country and of Ireland; in the question of repatriation from the United States; in the condition of the Indians; and in the defence of Britain from the dangers of a Napoleonic invasion. Minds such as that of Lord Selkirk require material for constant thought, and find satisfaction in discussing such problems and planning useful enterprises. The enthusiasms of

such men have often been of the greatest value to the world.

The disproof of this slur thrown upon the honour of Lord Selkirk, that he took advantage of the hospitality of the Nor'-Westers to obtain private information to be used in injuring their company, is seen in the fact that there is no evidence that for the following seven years the subject of gaining a hold of any portion of the fur traders' country for the purposes of colonization occupied his mind. Even if the subject were before his mind in those years, it seems very unlikely that he planned any scheme which would not allow the Nor'-Westers freedom of the vast territory which was sufficient for all their purposes.

As we have seen, philanthropic problems as to agriculture, the condition of the poor, the safety of the country, and the spread of civilization occupied his mind during these seven years. Lord Selkirk's work on emigration, consisting of well-nigh three hundred pages, discusses the state of the Highlands and the benefit of emigration to the colonies, but gives no hint that at that time he saw in the fur traders' land a field for emigration, or that envious thoughts had any place in his mind. He was in no way interested in the Hudson's Bay Company, and had no hostility to the Nor'-Westers.

By the year 1810 a plan had matured in the mind of the Earl of Selkirk to help the poor in his native

land and to carry out a project magnificent in its proportions and sufficient, if successfully executed, to relieve the widespread distress. This we may call the founding of a great colony in the interior of Rupert's Land—in other words the dream of a New World empire.

It is not necessary to suppose that any interest in the fur trade, for or against either of the companies, had anything to do with this great project. It was simply a comprehensive philanthropic scheme on the part of Lord Selkirk to relieve distress in his native land. In it was involved the ambition to succeed in so vast an enterprise.

As to the state of England in the first decade of the nineteenth century there can be no two opinions. A great English historian has said: "During the fifteen years which preceded Waterloo, the number of the population rose from ten to thirteen millions, and this rapid increase kept down the rate of wages, which would naturally have advanced in a corresponding degree with the increase in the national wealth. Even manufactures, though destined in the long run to benefit the labouring classes, seemed at first rather to depress them. . . . While labour was thus thrown out of its older grooves, and the rate of wages kept down at an artificially low figure by the rapid increase of population, the rise in the price of wheat, which brought wealth to the landowner and the farmer, brought famine and death to the poor, for England was cut

off by the Napoleonic war from the vast cornfields of the continent of America. Scarcity was followed by a terrible pauperization of the labouring classes. The amount of the poor rate rose fifty per cent.; and with the increase of poverty followed its inevitable result, the increase of crime."

It was in 1809 that the state of despair reached its worst, and the kind-hearted and ingenious-minded earl was impelled to action. He began to consider how, even though he should involve himself and his estate in heavy financial obligations, he might assist his Highland fellow-countrymen, whose traditions and associations he admired. Judged by the hard canons of finance we can see that he was projecting a very unlikely and doubtful enterprise; but to the earl with his deep sympathy and somewhat too vivid imagination it seemed feasible. Whatever the leading motive which dictated his course, it was certainly neither a partizan nor a sordid one.

With the remarkable caution that was united with his spirit of enterprise, he sought to know the legal basis on which the Hudson's Bay Company founded its title. In view of the importance which afterwards became attached to the legal question involved, it may be well to give the opinion of five distinguished English lawyers to whom the question was submitted.

"We are of opinion that the grant of the soil contained in the Charter (H. B. Co.'s Charter, of 1670) is good, and that it will include all the

country, the waters of which run into Hudson Bay, as ascertained by geographical observations.

"We are of opinion that an individual, holding from the Hudson's Bay Company a lease, or grant in fee simple of any part of their territory, will be entitled to all the ordinary rights of landed property in England, and will be entitled to prevent other persons from occupying any part of the lands, from cutting down timber, and fishing in the adjoining waters (being such as a private right of fishing may subsist in), and may (if he can peaceably or otherwise by due course of law) dispossess them of any buildings which they have recently erected within the limits of their property.

"We are of opinion that the grant of the civil and criminal jurisdiction is valid, but it is not granted to the company, but to the government and council at their respective establishments; but we cannot recommend it to be exercised so as to affect the lives or limbs of criminals. It is to be exercised by the governor and council as judges, who are to proceed according to the law of England.

"The company may appoint a sheriff to execute judgments, and to do his duty as in England.

"We are of opinion that the sheriff, in case of resistance to his authority, may collect the population to his assistance, and may put arms into the hands of his servants for defence against attack, and to assist in enforcing the judgments of the court;

but such powers cannot be exercised with too much circumspection.

"We are of opinion that all persons will be subject to the jurisdiction of the court who reside, or are found within the territories over which it extends.

"We do not think the Canada Jurisdiction Act (43. Geo. III.) gives jurisdiction within the territories of the Hudson's Bay Company, the same being within the jurisdiction of their own governors and councils.

"We are of opinion that the governor (in Hudson Bay) might, under the authority of the company, appoint constables and other officers for the preservation of the peace, and that the officers so appointed would have the same duties and privileges as the same officers in England, so far as these duties and privileges may be applicable to their situation in the territories of the company.

(Signed) "Samuel Romilly
"G. S. Holroyd
"W. M. Cruise
"J. Scarlett
"John Bell."

The report of these prominent lawyers gave Lord Selkirk his warrant for proceeding with his scheme. This was nothing else than obtaining, by purchase of its stock, a controlling interest in the Hudson's Bay Company. In the year 1810 he and his friends succeeded in purchasing a large

quantity of the stock of the Hudson's Bay Company, and by May, 1811, they owned £35,000 out of a total of £105,000.

The general court of the proprietors was called together for a meeting on May 30th, and the decision arrived at was of momentous interest not only to Lord Selkirk, but to the North-West Company, to the Hudson's Bay Company, and to British interests in the whole fur country of Rupert's Land, the Indian territories, and even in Canada. About £45,000 worth of stock was represented at the meeting. Nearly £30,000 of this amount was in the hands of Lord Selkirk and his friends. Such well-known Hudson's Bay Company names as Wedderburn, Mainwaring, Berens, and Pelly are chronicled in the minutes as on Lord Selkirk's side, while of the opponents Thwaytes and Whitehead owned £13,000, while three Nor'-Westers, who had purchased their stock within forty-eight hours of the time of the meeting, opposed the majority. These were Alexander Mackenzie, John Inglis, and Edward Ellice, and they together held £2,500 of stock.

The proposition Lord Selkirk made to the company was a great and important one. It was for the purchase of a tract of land in Rupert's Land lying east and west of the Red River of the North, and it involved the obligation on the part of the earl to settle, within a limited time, a large colony on the lands acquired, and the assumption

of the expense of transport, of outlay for the settlers, of government, of protection, and of quieting the Indian title to the lands.

The die was now cast. A territory consisting of some one hundred and ten thousand square miles, a region larger than Manitoba, was possessed by one man. He was a determined enthusiast who would imperil his estates and all his means for the furtherance of his project. He would beat down opposition, whether from the British government, the jealousy of the fur-trading section of the Hudson's Bay Company, or the bitter animosity of the North-West Company which considered the scheme one deliberately aimed at its influence, if not at its very existence.

CHAPTER IV

THE COLONY BEGUN

AN anxious season was now passed through by the colonizer. The planning and execution of a scheme of emigration as comparatively simple as carrying his eight hundred settlers to the shore of Prince Edward Island had been serious and difficult, how much more so was the crossing of the flow of Arctic ice from Hudson Strait, the landing on the inhospitable shore of Hudson Bay, and the penetration of the interior by a wild and dangerous route of seven hundred miles to the banks of the Red River. In all probability the founder had no conception himself of the gigantic obstacles which were to be met and overcome.

The project once entered on could not be abandoned; and the colonizer issued the advertisement and prospectus of the colony, and called for emigrants to join the enterprise. The advantages presented were clearly set forth, and the principles on which the colony was to be organized were satisfactory. His Lordship undertook to provide transport, to give the means of livelihood for a time, and to bestow parcels of land from his broad acres on Red River. The declaration that the greatest freedom of religious opinion was to be allowed, was,

for the beginning of the nineteenth century, a rather unique and unexpected proviso. Here was a contrast both to the conditions of settlement in Puritan New England, and to the early settlement of Lord Baltimore in Maryland where belief in the doctrine of the Trinity was a *sine quâ non.*

As it was not a part of Lord Selkirk's plan to accompany the expedition himself, it was necessary for him to obtain the assistance of a competent director or leader for the band of colonists. Some years before this time, the earl had been in correspondence with a young United Empire Loyalist named Miles Macdonell, who with his family, well-known in Canadian affairs, had left New York state and come to Glengarry, in Upper Canada. Young Macdonell had been an officer of the King's Royal Regiment in the war of the American Revolution, and held the rank of captain in the Canadian militia. To the colonizer's mind he possessed the necessary experience and firmness for the difficult task of leading a mixed band of emigrants during their trying journey. By the end of June, Captain Miles Macdonell had reached Britain and had been placed in charge of the enterprise.

Three ships, the *Prince of Wales*, the *Eddystone* and an old craft the *Edward and Anne* with worn rigging and an incompetent crew, had proceeded to Yarmouth, on the east coast of England. The two first-named were to carry the regular

cargo of the company to Hudson Bay; the third, unsuitable though it was, was to be the receptacle of the precious human freight going forth to found a new community. By the middle of July the little fleet had reached the Pentland Firth and was compelled to put into Stromness, in the Orkneys. Here the *Prince of Wales* took on board a number of Orkneymen who were to go out as servants of the company. Proceeding on their way the fleet made rendezvous at Stornoway, the chief town of Lewis, one of the Hebrides. Here had arrived a number of colonists or employés, some from Sligo, others from Glasgow, and others from the Highlands.

Many influences were now brought to bear against the colonizing expedition. It had the strenuous opposition of Sir Alexander Mackenzie, and pressure was successfully brought to bear upon some of those who had actually accepted Lord Selkirk's offer, in order to induce them to desert the expedition. A so-called "Captain" Mackenzie, denominated a "mean fellow," came alongside the *Edward and Anne*, which had some seventy-six men aboard—Glasgow men, Irish, and a few from Orkney—and claimed some of them as "deserters from His Majesty's service." The demand was, however, resisted. It is no wonder that in his letter to Lord Selkirk, Captain Macdonell writes: "All the men that we shall have are now embarked, but it has been a herculean task."

A prominent member of the expedition, Mr. Moncrieff Blair, though posing as a gentleman, deserted on July 25th, the day before the sailing of the vessels. A number of the deserters at Stornoway had left their effects on board, and these were disposed of by sale among the passengers. Among the officers was a Mr. Edwards, who acted as the medical man of the expedition. He had his hands completely full during the voyage, and returned to England with the ships.

Another notable person on board was a Roman Catholic priest, known as Father Bourke. Captain Macdonell was himself a Roman Catholic, but he seems from the first to have had no confidence in the priest, who, he stated, had come away without the leave of his bishop, who was at the time in Dublin. Father Bourke, though carried safely to the shores of Hudson Bay, never reached the interior, but returned to Britain in the following year.

After the usual incidents, and an "uncommon share of boisterous, stormy, and cold weather" on the ocean, the ships entered Hudson Bay. Experiencing in the bay a course of fine mild weather and moderate fair winds, on September 24th the fleet reached the harbour of York Factory, after a voyage of sixty-one days out from Stornoway. The *Eddystone*, which was intended to go to Churchill, not having been able to reach that place, sailed with the other vessels to York Factory.

WINTER NEAR YORK FACTORY

The late arrival of the expedition on the shores of Hudson Bay made it impossible to ascend the Nelson River and reach the interior during the season of 1811. Accordingly Captain Macdonell made preparations for wintering on the coast. York Factory would not probably have afforded sufficient accommodation for the colonists. Captain Macdonell states in a letter to Lord Selkirk that "the Factory is very ill constructed and not at all adapted for a cold country." In consequence of these considerations, Captain Macdonell at once undertook, during the fair weather of the season yet remaining, to build winter quarters on the north side of the river, at a distance of some miles from the Factory. No doubt matters of discipline entered into the plans of the leader of the colonists. In a short time very comfortable dwellings were erected, built of round logs a foot thick, the front side high with a shade roof sloping to the rear. The group of huts was known as the "Nelson encampment."

During the early winter the chief work which the captain laid on his two score men was providing themselves with fuel, of which there was plenty, and obtaining food from the Factory, for which sledges drawn over the snow were utilized by the detachments sent on this service. The most serious difficulty, however, arose at a meeting in which a dozen or more of the men became completely insubordinate, and refused to yield obedience either to Captain Macdonell or to M. W. H. Cook, the

governor of the Factory. Every effort was made to maintain discipline, but the men steadily held to their own way, lived apart from Macdonell, and drew their own provisions from the fort to their huts. These troubles tended to make the winter somewhat long and disagreeable.

Captain Macdonell, being a Canadian, knew well the danger of the dread scurvy attacking his inexperienced colonists. The men at the fort prophesied evil things in this respect for the "encampment." The captain took early steps to prevent the disease, and his letters to Governor Cook always contain demands for "essence of malt," "crystallized salts of lemon," and other anti-scorbutics. Though some of his men were attacked by scurvy, yet the sovereign remedy so often employed in the lumber camps of America, the juice of the white spruce, was used with almost magical effect. As the winter went on, plenty of venison was obtained, and the health of his party was in the spring much better than could have been anticipated.

After the New Year had come, all thoughts were directed to preparations for the journey of seven hundred miles or thereabouts to the interior. A number of boats were required for the transportation of the colonists and their effects. Captain Macdonell insisted on his boats being made after a different style from the boats commonly used at that time by the company. His model was the flat boat, which he had seen used on the Mohawk River in the

state of New York. The workmanship displayed in the making of these boats was very disappointing to Captain Macdonell, and he constantly complained of the indolence of the workmen. In consequence of this inefficiency the cost of the boats to Lord Selkirk was very great, and drew forth the objections of the leader of the colony.

Captain Macdonell had the active assistance of Mr. Cook, the officer in charge of York Factory, and of Mr. Auld, the commander of Churchill, the latter having come down to York to make arrangements for the inland journey of the colonists.

By June 1st, 1812, the ice had moved from the river, and the expedition started soon after on its journey to Red River. The new settlers found the route a hard and trying one with its rapids and portages. The boats, too, were heavy, and the colonists inexperienced in managing them. It was well on towards autumn when the company, numbering about seventy, reached the Red River. No special preparation had been made for the colonists, and the winter would soon be upon them. Some of the parties were given shelter in the fort and buildings of the company, others in the huts of the freed men, who were married to the Indian women and settled in the neighbourhood of the Forks, while others still found refuge in the tents of the Indian encampment in the vicinity.

The arrival of this party, small, discontented, wearied and well-nigh despairing, marks an era in

the history of the Red River, and of the present province of Manitoba. Though it was no very distinguished party, though it had no story of sentiment such as the Pilgrim Fathers had when they arrived at Plymouth Rock, though it was free of the glory of Penn as he came to lay down the principle of peace to the dusky savages, and though it lacked the political grandeur of the companies of the United Empire Loyalists who came to Upper Canada, yet it was the beginning of settlement upon the prairies, and is, therefore, of genuine interest and importance.

Lord Selkirk's indomitable perseverance had been rewarded by proving that a company of British settlers could weather a severe winter, and ascend the rapids and falls of the rivers running from the interior to Hudson Bay. His hopes to be the founder of a large community were not to be realized in his day; yet the last quarter of the nineteenth century has shown, in the settlement of Manitoba, the prescience and wisdom of Lord Selkirk.

CHAPTER V

RED RIVER OCCUPIED

THE outlook was dark for the band of colonists on the banks of the Red River. Milton and Cheadle, fifty years afterwards in starting on their journey westward across the plains from Red River complained that their chief difficulty was want of food. No field of grain had ever been sown on the fertile banks of the Red River when the colonists arrived. Game and fish were the only natural sources of the food supply. The shelter was insufficient, and the winter, with its low temperatures, was coming upon the unready settlers. Miles Macdonell, the governor as he was called, had tried to provide something for his dependents. Certain supplies of potatoes, barley, oats and garden seeds, were bought from the North-West Company, and these had been imported from Canada at a large expense. A few farm animals had also been brought to Red River to begin the operations of the infant settlement.

As the winter progressed supplies began to fail, and Governor Macdonell sought other means of support. The banks of the Red River, in what is now Manitoba, are much more wooded than the territory on the south side of the American bound-

ary line, in what is now Dakota. Lying lower, as it does, Manitoba has a large expanse of meadowland, and not the high plains which are found in Dakota. The herds of buffalo are fond of the elevated plateaux, and accordingly did not approach within sixty or seventy miles of the infant settlement. Governor Macdonell led his settlers up the banks of the Red River to a point where he selected a site for an encampment at Pembina, as the Nor'-Western fort was called. The herds of buffalo here were so tame that they came to rub themselves against the stockades of the fort. Though unaccustomed to the chase the new settlers obtained sufficient food for sustenance, and were thus able to pass their first winter.

The forks of the Red and Assiniboine Rivers, where now stands the city of Winnipeg, was the centre about which the new settlers gathered. Though now considered the chief centre of the West it was not so before the beginning of the nineteenth century. Important forts near where the towns of Portage la Prairie and Brandon now stand had, at the end of the eighteenth century, been the centres of trade. Fort Gibraltar, the first fort erected at the Forks, with the exception of a temporary French post in 1738, was begun only in 1804 by a *bourgeois* of the North-West Company. An encampment of the Hudson's Bay Company seems to have been established shortly before the arrival of the colonists, but now a number of buildings were

erected a mile north of Fort Gibraltar at a point ever since known as Colony Gardens.

While these trying experiences were overtaking the forlorn and inexperienced company of settlers, Lord Selkirk was seeking additional colonists to swell the numbers of his Red River establishment. The opposition of the Nor'-Wester agents in Britain was very damaging to him. Any reports of the sufferings of the first band of emigrants which may have reached the motherland were sure to be given currency.

Small though the number on the second voyage may have been, yet even these were seriously delayed at Stornoway, their place of embarkation, by the collector of customs, who, it will be remembered, was a relative of Sir Alexander Mackenzie. Objection was raised that the number being carried by the Hudson's Bay Company ships was in contravention to the Dundas Act. Through Lord Selkirk's interference, however, the ships were permitted to sail.

As if to fill their cup of trouble ship-fever broke out upon the voyage, so that a number of the passegners and crew died at sea, and others on the shore of Hudson Bay. A small number—not more than fifteen or twenty colonists—were ready to undertake the toilsome route from York Factory to Red River, and they were fortunate in being able to make the journey from Stornoway to Red River in one season, viz., that of 1813.

At Red River the little band, with marvellous pluck, made the most of its hard lot. Inured to the life of the country by their winter experience at Pembina the settlers returned to the settlement. The summer supply of food was even more difficult to obtain than that of the winter. The fish in the Red River were few in 1813; and edible roots and berries were scarcer than usual. The chief dependence of the settlers was on the starchy taproot of a plant growing on the plains, said by some to have been of the parsnip family, but probably the root of the prairie turnip of the pea family. The succulent leaves of a plant of the goosefoot family were boiled as pottage, and assisted in saving the settlers from starvation.

Though unprovided with agricultural implements, so great was the zeal of the new comers that with the help of the hoe they sowed a small quantity of wheat, which they had obtained from the fort at the foot of Winnipeg River on Lake Winnipeg. They were surprised to see their small sowing return them, in the finest wheat, nearly one hundred fold. The great yield gave them hope of the goodly land to which they had come, though their small patches of grain were preserved with great difficulty from blackbirds and pigeons, which, in myriads, sought to take toll of the strangers who had come to rob them of their solitudes.

To the difficulties of Governor Macdonell were now added the additional party, small though it

was, to be provided for and introduced to the hardships of an unknown and most trying life. The supply of food for the second winter was no more abundant than for the first, and the number of colonists was now approaching one hundred. The experience of the first winter had shown that a removal to Pembina was the only way of gaining an adequate means of supply. Accordingly the whole band wended their way southward to their winter quarters.

On their first arrival the Nor'-Westers had shown them no great opposition, thinking probably that the settlers would retire from the country when they found their hardships insupportable. The arrival of the second band, small though it was, began to show the Nor'-Westers that the colonizer was determined, and was not to be thwarted. No doubt this feeling of antagonism was increased by the action of Governor Macdonell, who issued a proclamation and built a fort, during his second winter in the neighbourhood of Pembina, to which he gave the name Fort Daer, from one of the family titles of Lord Selkirk.

Accordingly the colonists in their second winter sojourn at Pembina experienced a complete change in the attitude of the French half-breeds, who resided about them. In the former year, in their inexperience, the French natives had helped them greatly, but now things were changed. The half-breeds were evidently instructed by their masters, the Nor'-West

traders, to lend no assistance to the needy strangers. The snow was deep, and the colonists found it difficult to pursue the buffalo, and were often in great straits for food. Plots were sprung upon them, which made them afraid to go far from their place of abode, and provisions purchased by them were obtained at a very high price. When spring came the discouraged settlers returned in a destitute condition to their holdings near the Forks. A writer of the country describes them as "having had to barter away their clothing for food, many of them frost-bitten, half-naked, and so discouraged, that they resolved never to return to Pembina again under any circumstances."

Notwithstanding the serious obstacles which met the hundred colonists on Red River, the noble founder continued his efforts to add new members to his colony. No doubt the remoteness of his colony, and the impossibility of obtaining frequent information from it, hid from Lord Selkirk the serious condition of things on the Red River.

In 1813 he succeeded in despatching the largest number of settlers he had yet sent, and these reached Churchill by the *Prince of Wales* which started on her voyage from the Orkneys. Mr. Archibald Macdonald, who was in charge of this party while on its way to the interior, has left us a clear and interesting pamphlet as to their journey. The party was ninety-three strong. At Churchill, according to reports, they suffered much, as a severe fever had

raged among them on the sea voyage, and they were in a very unfit state to endure the severity of winter in so high a latitude.

About the middle of the following April Macdonald led a portion of his party—those strongest and most fit for the journey—by way of York Factory and up the Nelson River to the rendezvous on Red River. Arriving at their destination before the end of June, they were able to plant a considerable quantity of potatoes.

The possession of houses—though of a very humble kind—and the subdivision of the land produced a happier state of mind among the colonists. The second part of Macdonald's party arrived later in the season, Governor Macdonell having gone north to meet them.

On account of causes afterwards to be explained, some one hundred and fifty of the colonists, prejudiced by their difficulties and also led by strong inducements offered them by the Nor'-Westers, left Red River and by a long canoe journey down the fur traders' route reached the shores of Georgian Bay in Upper Canada and were given lands and assistance in the western part of that province. About one quarter of the colonists decided to remain in Red River Settlement, but these were threatened by the half-breeds and fled northwards to Jack River, since known as Norway House, near the north end of Lake Winnipeg.

In these unfortunate circumstances Governor

Macdonell was served with a summons to answer certain charges preferred against him before the courts of Lower Canada, and went east compelled to leave his hapless colonists without leadership or guidance.

Hunger, cold, enmity, persecution, threats, and actual personal violence, added to the homesickness and state of doubt incident to a new settler's life, made the condition of the Selkirk settlers at the end of 1814 in their refuge at Jack River a most pitiable one. But Lord Selkirk was a determined and brave man, and with true Scottish pluck he made arrangements for sending out another party, the best and strongest yet, to make good the loss by desertion, and to strengthen and defend the remnant now in a place of refuge. Governor Macdonell having been removed by legal process, his place had to be filled, and the colonizer obtained a military officer of high standing in the British army, who had been a notable traveller and author. This was Robert Semple, thereafter known as Governor Semple.

With a party of one hundred Highlanders, mostly from the parish of Kildonan, near Helmsdale, in Sutherlandshire, Scotland, the new governor hastened on his way, and made the whole journey from Britain to Red River in the one season of 1815, reaching his destination in October of that year.

On arriving at the settlement Governor Semple found the faithful remnant, which had fled to Jack

River, again upon their lands, led by Colin Robertson, a Hudson's Bay Company officer who had been sent to their assistance and who had been successful in inducing them to return to their deserted homesteads.

Such was the occupation of the Red River district by its first settlers. Nearly three hundred had been sent out by His Lordship. One half of these had gone to Upper Canada, and formed successful settlements in the township of Gwillimbury, south of Lake Simcoe, and in the district south of London in Upper Canada.

Other disasters followed the settlement, as we shall see in another chapter, but the foundation was laid and a control assumed which no doubt preserved the country for the British Crown. The Selkirk settlers were a barrier to all the machinations of the worst elements of the United States frontier who sought to foment disturbances between the two countries. Moreover, the Selkirk settlement became a nucleus around which gathered the retired traders of the Hudson's Bay Company with their wives and children, many of these having Indian blood. Thus was formed one of the most unique communities that the ethnologist can investigate.

Education and religion did not leave the infant settlement long neglected. A Scottish elder, empowered by the Church of Scotland to marry and baptize, accompanied the party brought out by

Governor Semple. The Roman Catholic Church sent out two devoted priests a few years later, and shortly after these came a clergyman from England to represent the Church Missionary Society.

From being a number of scattered and discouraged settlers the community grew to have an individuality, very marked in speech, customs, manners, and ideals. No doubt from its remoteness and want of energy it had peculiarities which might not draw forth unbounded admiration, but on the whole it was a staid, moral, loyal community. As we shall see, two years after the arrival of his last party, Lord Selkirk visited the settlement in the time of its greatest distress.

The chief service rendered to the empire by the Red River Settlement was that it became the predecessor of the Manitoba of to-day—of Manitoba with its sturdiness, energy, and enterprise, qualities which are making it an influential member of the sisterhood of provinces in the Canadian dominion.

CHAPTER VI

ANGRY PASSIONS

THE opposition shown by Sir Alexander Mackenzie and his Nor'-Wester friends in Britain to Lord Selkirk's scheme, first in opposing it in the Court of Adventurers of Hudson Bay and again in endeavouring to lead aside colonists who had accepted Lord Selkirk's terms, was but a presage of the attitude of the Canadian traders to the new settlers. True, on the arrival of the colonists, a position of hostility was not definitely taken by the Nor'-Westers, probably because the scheme was so chimerical to them that they believed it would fail by its own defects. However, the feeling of enmity early showed itself.

The half-breeds, *bois-brûlés*, or Métis, as they are in different accounts called, were chiefly allied to the Canadian traders, and they were inspired with the thought that this settlement meant an invasion of their territory and was an infringement of the Indian title, in which through their mothers they had an interest.

The Indians were much interested and even diverted by the newcomers. The thought of a people not living by the chase, but hoping to gain a livelihood by cultivating the soil seemed to them unique,

and lacked the romance of their wild and venturesome life. Observing the futile efforts of the colonists to turn up the earth with no implement more effective than the ordinary hoe and thus to attempt to grow wheat and oats, the Indians were quick to take up the words by which the French-Canadian half-breeds designated the colonists, *jardiniers* or gardeners, and *mangeurs de lard*—pork eaters—the one nickname signifying something like rustic or clodhopper to us, the other greenhorn or bungler.

It is worthy of note that even on the part of the Hudson's Bay Company's traders in the country there was some feeling of jealousy towards the colonists. Lord Selkirk had but lately bought stock in the company and was regarded as an interloper, and the "old hands" in the country were averse to the new plans proposed.

As already mentioned, the arrival of a second and then other contingents, sent out through the energy of the founder, aroused on all hands a feeling of alarm, and though the acres of Rupert's Land were wide, yet it must be confessed that new settlers were very far from being acceptable, much less popular, to the aborigines and mixed races among whom they came.

The new colonists being so ill-provided with the necessaries of life, and the bareness of the country making it impossible to give them subsistence, rendered the situation most difficult, and indeed

alarming. The founder's money was available for purchasing supplies, but there was no store of supplies for purchase. The long and dreary winter on the Great Lake so mournfully described in the sombre poem "Hiawatha," became more serious still on the borders of Lakes Winnipeg and Manitoba.

The instinct of self-preservation is one of the most imperious known to us. And so it came that during the second winter spent at Pembina by Miles Macdonell and his hungry followers, when buffaloes were scarce, the snow deep, and the attitude of the half-breeds so distinctly hostile, the governor bethought himself of some device by which he might secure a more certain means of support for his discouraged colonists. On reading over his instructions, based on the legal opinion given on a former page of the right of Lord Selkirk to exercise important powers in the country, Governor Macdonell determined to take an effective step towards utilizing the resources of the country. So in the very heart of the bitter and discouraging winter, the governor issued a proclamation, dated January 8th, 1814, in which the preamble runs: "Whereas the Right Honourable Thomas, Earl of Selkirk, is anxious to provide for the families at present forming settlements, etc., . . . all traders and others within the territory of the Hudson's Bay Company are forbidden to take provisions from the territory without permission in the form of a governor's license."

Now this proclamation played a great part in the events of the subsequent three years, not only in Red River Settlement but also throughout Rupert's Land.

No doubt under the legal opinion in his hands the founder and his deputy were justified in taking the step they did. At the same time it has been generally considered an imprudent and unfortunate act. The Nor'-Westers were the direct successors by blood, by colonial connection and sympathy, of the old French *voyageurs* who, three-quarters of a century before, had first explored Lake Winnipeg, the Red and Assiniboine Rivers, and the Saskatchewan up to the shadow of the Rocky Mountains. The native people were born in the land which their Indian ancestors claimed. The North-West Company had been in the district concerned a generation before the Hudson's Bay Company. Taking all these things into account, the proclamation was deemed a high-handed act which really dispossessed the people, and struck a blow at the high-spirited North-West Company, which in local resources was much the strongest force in the country. Moreover, the law of embargo is ever unpopular and distasteful, even when the legal authority to issue it may be undoubted.

It is quite true that the proclamation made provision for no monetary loss on the part of any one whose goods might be seized for the use of the colony. The document declared: "The provisions

procured and raised as above shall be taken for the use of the colony; and that no loss may accrue to the parties concerned, they will be paid for by British bills at the customary rates."

A chorus of dissents and angry threats greeted the ill-starred proclamation. The half-breeds, most of whom were trappers and accustomed to the free life of the plains, were especially thrown into a ferment. That what they considered a handful of foreigners should arrogantly curtail their natural rights was a thing not to be borne. Their loud protestations reached the ears of the governor, and their threats not only to disregard the proclamation but even to meet it with armed resistance roused the unfortunate governor to further action. The calm judgment of later times looks at the small force at the disposal of Governor Macdonell, and though not giving him credit for much wisdom or caution, admires his pluck and decision.

His next step was to direct his subordinate, Sheriff John Spencer, to proceed to Brandon House, a Hudson's Bay Company's fort one hundred miles or more west of the Red River, and situated on the bank of the Assiniboine, and to seize provisions which had been collected at Souris River, the North-West dépôt near the company's fort. Spencer seems to have had a more vivid sense of the danger than his superior officer, and would not go unless the governor would give him detailed instructions as to how he should proceed, and would guarantee

him against any subsequent damages. Governor Macdonell was something of a martinet and did not hesitate a moment in authorizing extreme steps to be taken.

Spencer executed his mission promptly and efficiently. No armed resistance was offered by the North-West Company's fort, and he seized six hundred bags of pemmican (dried buffalo meat), each weighing eighty-five pounds. The prize was placed under the care of the master of Brandon House, near by.

West and east alike were now aflame. The Nor'-Westers did not take immediate action. Knowing that their annual gathering would take place in early summer at Fort William, they held back until proper plans could be laid for vindicating themselves, and making their reprisals with due certainty. Simon McGillivray, one of the great Montreal chiefs of the North-West Company, had declared his dictum two years before this time: "Lord Selkirk must be driven to abandon his project, for his success would strike at the very existence of our trade."

The council at Fort William represented the full energy of the North-West Company, and their leaders were astute, determined, and ingenious men. They sent two of their most energetic traders, Duncan Cameron and Alexander Macdonell—the one representing a conciliatory if somewhat deceptive policy, the other being the apostle of force and

violence if necessary. Their choice showed the shrewd insight of the North-West Company's officers.

Duncan Cameron immediately began, on his return to Fort Gibraltar, his plan of oily persuasion. Being a Highlander and speaking Gaelic, which gave him instant entrance to the hearts of the colonists, he paid special attention to the leaders of the people by inviting them to the fort and entertaining them with true Highland hospitality. He further assumed an authority and state that impressed the simple-minded people with the glamour which the idea of chieftainship has for the Highland mind. He had been a member of a border corps of volunteers in Canada in 1812, and now had himself styled "Captain Commanding, etc." The accuracy of this title has been questioned. He certainly was dressed in a flaring red uniform which somewhat supported his claim. During the winter following the meeting of the partners at Fort William, Cameron organized his plan. He succeeded in gaining the allegiance of three-quarters of the Selkirk colonists, and awaited the opening of spring to carry out his full scheme.

The absence of Governor Macdonell at Pembina gave the Nor'-Westers an opportunity of advancing their interests at the Forks. Finding that a minority of the colonists were loyal to Lord Selkirk and their engagements, threats of violence were resorted to, and demand was made upon Archibald Macdonald, who had charge of the company's stores as vice-

governor, to hand over the field-pieces belonging to the colony. On this being resisted, the settlers who were prepared to follow Cameron broke open the storehouses and removed nine guns to Fort Gibraltar.

Governor Macdonell soon after returned, and having been served with a notice to surrender to the authorities represented by the Nor'-Westers, refused to acknowledge it. In June, a fortnight after the arrival of Alexander Macdonell, who represented the policy of violence of the North-West traders, a body of armed men proceeded from Fort Gibraltar and fired upon a number of the employés of the colony. In order to avoid further irritation and prevent possible bloodshed, Governor Miles Macdonell agreed to recognize the warrant issued for his arrest and proceeded under arrest to Montreal, but was never brought to trial.

Cameron was now ready to carry out his promise to the settlers who were disloyal to the colony; and in June with the deserters departed on his long journey to Upper Canada. In order to coerce the remainder, a notice, signed by Cuthbert Grant, the young leader of the half-breeds, and three others, was served upon the colonists: "All settlers to retire immediately from the Red River, and no trace of a settlement to remain." Naturally unwilling to give up their holdings and to return to the inhospitable shores of Lake Winnipeg, the settlers did not acquiesce.

At this time a fiery Highlander, seemingly able to cope with either Cameron or Macdonell, was in charge of the Hudson's Bay Company's affairs at the Forks. This was John McLeod. He gathered the colonists together into the group of buildings called the Colony Houses, and made his blacksmith shop, a small erection of logs, into a temporary fort. He took a small three or four pounder which was lying in the fort and brought it to the smithy. Bringing along a supply of powder, and cutting up a number of chains into short pieces the plucky Highlander awaited the assault.

It was on the very day of the serving of the order to the colonists to depart that a great demonstration of hostility was made by Alexander Macdonell and Cuthbert Grant, followed by some seventy or eighty armed men. In the fashion of the country they drew themselves up on their Indian ponies in battle array. The colonists and their leader stood their ground, and opened fire upon the attacking party with their chain shot, and scattered them.

McLeod in his journal states that, "All the colonists' houses were, however, destroyed by fire. Houseless, wounded, and in extreme distress, they took to the boats, and saving what they could, started for Norway House (Jack River), declaring they would never return."

After the departure of the colonists the assailants for several days kept up attacks on McLeod and

his Hudson's Bay Company servants, but at length retired, leaving the store of £800 to £1000 worth of valuable goods in the hands of their rightful owners. McLeod and three men repaired his buildings, and took steps to save the crops left behind by the refugee settlers.

He also in the last words of his diary makes an important announcement. "That done I took upon me, without order or suggestion from any quarter, to build a house for the governor and his staff of the Hudson's Bay Company at Red River. There was no such officer at that time, nor had there ever been, but I was aware that such an appointment was contemplated.

"I selected for this purpose what I considered a suitable site at a point or sharp bend in the Red River about two miles below the Assiniboine, on a slight rise on the south side of the point—since known as Point Douglas, the family name of the Earl of Selkirk. Possibly I so christened it—I forget."

Diplomacy and force combined seemed to have triumphed as embodied in the persons of Cameron and Macdonell. The order, "No trace of a settlement to remain," seems to have been a prophecy now fulfilled. Dark indeed looked the future for the two score colonists left crouching on the rocky shore at Jack River.

CHAPTER VII

BLOODSHED

IN the attack made on the colonists' quarters by the *bois-brûlés* a worthy gentleman, John Warren, of the Hudson's Bay Company service, had been killed. Blood had been shed, and it was the general expectation that other victims would follow. The total removal of the colonists, by deportation or expulsion, for a time gave an ominous peace. But the news of expected trouble had found its way down the fur-traders' route, and Colin Robertson, formerly a Nor'-Wester officer, came to the rescue under engagement to watch over Lord Selkirk's interests, and brought with him twenty Canadians. Finding the settlers had gone to Lake Winnipeg he followed them, and succeeded in leading them back to their deserted homesteads.

About ninety new settlers from Scotland, mostly from Helmsdale in Sutherlandshire, came in a single season, as we have seen, and Governor Semple's control gave hope of better things. Several of the demolished buildings were rebuilt, the governor's house was improved, others were erected beside it, and Fort Douglas began to assume a more military appearance.

The Hudson's Bay Company and colony under

the leadership of Governor Semple, a military man, and Colin Robertson, an experienced officer, became more aggressive. Fort Gibraltar, in its turn was captured by Robertson, and the field-pieces and other booty taken by the Nor'-Westers were restored to their rightful owners. Duncan Cameron was likewise seized as a reprisal for the arrest of Miles Macdonell, but he was given his liberty again.

The greatest anxiety now prevailed on both sides. For a few months Governor Semple had, with the colonists, made the usual winter visit to Fort Daer to hunt buffaloes, which this year were very abundant. Shortly after the New Year (1816) Governor Semple returned to the Forks, and he and Robertson now determined to act with decision on account of the threatenings of the *bois-brûlés* as to their purposes in the spring. Fort Gibraltar was captured, and Cameron, the commandant, was arrested, and taken by Colin Robertson to York Factory. On account of the ship from the bay not departing as usual, Cameron did not reach England for seventeen months.

Governor Semple now determined to dismantle Fort Gibraltar and take the material down to strengthen Fort Douglas. Before Colin Robertson's departure with Cameron in charge the destruction of Fort Gibraltar had been discussed with the governor, and Robertson had disapproved of it. However, on the departure of Cameron the fort was

dismantled, its stockades made into a raft, the remaining material piled upon it, and the whole floated down the Red River to Fort Douglas. Following out the same policy the officer commanding Fort Daer seized the North-West Company's fort at Pembina.

The new policy of "thorough" adopted by Governor Semple was, as events proved, a dangerous one. The Indians and "free-traders," the latter being French-Canadians with Indian wives, not attached to either company, were both inflammable elements. Fearing trouble the free-traders betook themselves to the plains. The Indians hearing the threats coming from the west, strange to say, offered the colonists their assistance. Governor Semple seems to have been living in a fool's paradise, not suspecting the danger by which he was surrounded. His late arrival in the country probably explains his want of prudent preparation. The cloud rising in the west grew darker and darker. From the east, too, came a rumour that a Nor'-Wester force was coming from Fort William to attack the settlement.

Cuthbert Grant wrote from the west to one of the Canadian officers that as soon as spring came the *bois-brûlés*, the "new nation," as he now called them, would drive out the settlers, and would remain at Red River for the summer to ensure that the settlers did not return. His words were loud and boastful. Efforts were made to induce the

Indians to join the western levies, but the redman was too astute to commit himself. *Nitchie*, as the Indian is called in the west, always wagers on the winning horse.

Coming down from Qu'Appelle and gathering his forces at Brandon and Portage la Prairie, Cuthbert Grant, with great spirit and bravery, swept down to overwhelm the English company and the helpless colonists. Mounted on fleet Indian ponies the party moved with great rapidity. Some four miles west of the Forks, the Nor'-Wester and half-breed contingent left the banks of the Assiniboine and crossed the prairie, probably to avoid Fort Douglas and to join forces with the eastern contingent.

It was on June 19th, 1816—a sad and bloody day commemorated by a stone monument three miles north of the city of Winnipeg, at the side of the king's highway—that Cuthbert Grant's party was seen from the watch tower of Fort Douglas, and the governor with a party of twenty sallied out to meet them, largely unprotected and no doubt entirely underestimating the danger which lay before them. Full of bravery, that all now see to have been the most fatal rashness, Governor Semple went on, sending back for a cannon which was in the fort.

The half-breeds on their horses approached Governor Semple's party in the form of a half moon at a point near the Red River called Seven

Oaks, and made a dashing and threatening display as they swept forward.

The colonists had betaken themselves to Fort Douglas, and in the accents of their mournful Gaelic tongue made sad complaint. A daring fellow named Boucher came from the ranks of the attacking party and approached the governor. Gesticulating wildly, he called out in broken English, "What do you want? What do you want?" Governor Semple answered, "What do *you* want?" To this Boucher replied, "We want our fort." The governor said, "Well, go to your fort." At this juncture the governor unwisely placed his hand on Boucher's gun. Immediately a shot was fired, probably by accident, and at once the firing became general. It has generally been believed that the first shot, intentional or unintentional, was fired from the *bois-brûlés* line. In a few minutes the work was done. Semple, his staff, as well as others of the party to the number of twenty-two, fell—killed and wounded.

Governor Semple had his thigh bone broken by a shot, but was not killed. A kind French-Canadian undertook to care for the governor, but in the fury of the fight an Indian—the greatest rascal of the company—shot the wounded officer in the breast and killed him instantly. There were few Indians in the attacking party, but the half-breeds were many of them disguised in Indian dress and painted for the war dance.

Rarely does so complete a slaughter take place, and the plains of Rupert's Land had seen nothing approaching it in horror since the coming of the white man. Cuthbert Grant was full of excitement. Before the skirmish was fairly over he declared that unless the fort were given up immediately, it would be taken by force and every man, woman and child would be put to death. This policy, seemingly as determined as that of "Old Noll," was effective, and led to a bloodless surrender of Fort Douglas. On the evening of the third day after the fight, after an inventory had been taken of the effects, the band of colonists mournfully filed out of their fort, again to betake themselves to Lake Winnipeg, their haven of rest in trouble.

The other party which had come from Fort William was to meet that of Cuthbert Grant before the attack was made. It was perhaps this fact that led the western leader to conduct his men across the prairie in the rear of Fort Douglas. The eastern contingent was under the command of A. N. McLeod and two Swiss mercenaries engaged by the Nor'-Westers in Montreal. The length of the journey from Fort William—more than four hundred miles—is sufficient cause for their failure to reach the rendezvous promptly. The party was coming up Red River when they met the seven or eight boats loaded with colonists whom Cuthbert Grant had allowed to depart under the command of the sheriff of the Red River Settlement.

A very clear account of the latter part of this sanguinary episode in the fur traders' history is given by Sergeant Huerter, one of the Swiss mercenaries who had accompanied McLeod. After McLeod had challenged the retreating settlers he ordered them ashore, examined all the papers in their effects, took possession of all letters, account books, and documents of every kind, broke open Governor Semple's trunks, and indeed treated the poor colonists with needless severity.

Seven days after the fight McLeod's party arrived at Fort Douglas, and was received with volleys of artillery and small arms. As senior officer on his arrival McLeod took command of the fort, and occupied the quarters lately used by Governor Semple. Huerter visited the field of Seven Oaks shortly after his arrival and saw a miserable sight. A number of human bodies lay scattered about the plains, and were nearly reduced to skeletons, very little flesh adhering to the bones. It was said that many of the bodies had been partly devoured by dogs and wolves.

The savage Indian blood did not fail to assert itself in the rejoicings and revelry that took place after the victory. The *bois-brûlés* were painted, and danced naked after the Indian fashion. Riotous scenes took place day after day. Violent threats were freely made against the Hudson's Bay Company, Lord Selkirk—the founder—and even against the poor colonists themselves.

The poet of the French half-breeds—a rhymster named Pierre Falcon—celebrated the victory in his irregular numbers. The first stanza ran :—

> "Do you wish to listen to celebrate a song of truth ?
> The nineteenth of June the *bois-brûlés* have arrived
> As brave warriors,
> They have arrived at the Frog Plain."

The last stanza has been versified :—

> "Who has sung this song of triumph ?
> The good Pierre Falcon has composed it
> That his praise of these *bois-brûlés*
> Might be ever more recorded."

Alexander Ross, the historian of the early Red River days, has given a curious sequel to this deed of blood on the part of the *bois-brûlés* under their Nor'-Wester leaders. Of the sixty-five persons who composed Cuthbert Grant's party, he points out that no less than twenty-six met a violent or sudden death, and he gives the names and fate of the twenty-six in his work on Red River Settlement. Equally curious is the answer given by Joseph Tassé in his "Canadians of the West." "Ross would see in the miserable death of these men almost a chastisement of Providence, as if it was not unfortunately too often the lot reserved for these intrepid men, who pass their life in the chase, on the plains, or in the game forests of the North-West, who are constantly exposed to the greatest dangers and to accidents of every kind."

CHAPTER VIII

AN EXPEDITION OF RESCUE

LORD SELKIRK knew well that trouble and likely bloodshed were to be expected on Red River. His anxiety for the success of the colony and the happiness of his settlers led to his determination to visit Canada, and, if possible, the colony. Accordingly, late in the year 1815, taking with him his family, consisting of the countess, his son and two daughters, Lord Selkirk hastened to Montreal. On arriving in New York he learned of the first dispersion of the colonists, their flight to Norway House, and the further threatenings of the excited *bois-brûlés*. On the founder's arrival in Montreal in October, he found it too late to proceed on his journey up the lakes to the interior.

In Montreal he spent the winter in the face of his powerful enemies. The Nor'-Westers watched him with wolf-like ferocity. Full of the highest moral courage he brought the affairs of his beleaguered colony before the government of Lower Canada, but little did he know how bitter was the opposition engendered among the fur traders to himself and his scheme.

In February, 1815, Lord Selkirk represented his fears to Lord Bathurst, the British secretary of

state, and suggested the despatch of an armed force to preserve the peace. After the overt acts of violence committed during the summer of 1815 the case demanded immediate attention, and Lord Selkirk brought the urgency of the matter under the notice of Sir Gordon Drummond, governor of Lower Canada, supplying His Excellency with an account of the cruel expulsion of the people from their homes in the Red River.

It was plain that no influence could be brought upon the authorities to interfere in the matter. The greater part of the power in Lower Canada was in the hands of the Nor'-Westers and their friends, for the fur traders were the leading merchants of Montreal, and many of them were in the legislature and in positions of trust. It is true, as we have seen, that during the winter of 1815-16 there was little turmoil, but it was only the calm before the storm, and Lord Selkirk strongly suspected this.

Accordingly he began to plan a private expedition. This he would lead in person to the Red River, and restore his colony to peace. He had confidence in the strength of Fort Douglas to resist a considerable attack, and now that his new governor, Robert Semple, was there—an experienced and brave officer —he believed the case hopeful.

His Lordship was not, however, a man to do things by halves. He had been sworn in as a justice of the peace in Upper Canada and for the Indian

territories, and had received the promise of a sergeant and six men of the regular army to accompany and protect him. Not able to obtain the privilege of leading an armed party, that being a prerogative of the Crown, he originated a project of engaging a number of discharged soldiers and making them settlers, placing them upon his land, that, in time of need, he might call upon them for assistance.

The close of the Napoleonic wars had led to a reduction in the size of the British army. Among the brave Swiss regiments likely to be reduced were two which were sent to Canada to assist in the war against the United States. This war being now over the regiment often called, after the colonel of the more celebrated corps, the De Meurons, was disbanded. With some one hundred of these mercenaries Lord Selkirk concluded a bargain to go to the North-West as military settlers under his pay, and to render assistance as required.

Great outcry was made against Lord Selkirk for employing these soldiers ; the De Meurons are declared to have been desperadoes, worthless and despicable. It is well to remember that four of the same regiment were engaged by Mr. A. N. McLeod on his expedition to crush out the colony.

Early in June, 1816, a number of officers and about one hundred men went westward to York (Toronto), their strength being increased by as many sturdy canoemen. It was His Lordship's in-

tention to proceed westward to where the city of Duluth stands to-day, then known as Fond du Lac. Leaving the expedition before its arrival at Sault Ste. Marie, he had a conference with the garrison stationed on Drummond's Isle. Here the colonizer had a long and interesting interview with Kawtawahetay, an Ojibway chief, in which the Indian asserted that inducements had been held out to himself and his warriors to unite in driving the colonists entirely from Red River.

The party had little more than found Sault Ste. Marie when it was met with news of the most serious kind: nothing else than the murder, as it was called, of Governor Semple, the destruction of his band of attendants, and the banishment of the unfortunate settlers to their place of refuge on Jack River. This was a crushing blow.

The plan of voyage was at first to go by way of Fond du Lac and through what is now Minnesota to Red River, and thus reach Fort Douglas, which was to be their capital and residence. Now it was absolutely necessary to go to Fort William, and meet the enemies of his people, as they sought to return to Canada. Feeling as a magistrate that the *bois-brûlés* and their leaders had done grievous wrong, he determined to bring the murderers to justice.

The resolve to go to Fort William involved facing many dangers and risking a serious conflict. But Lord Selkirk had the courage of his ancestors. He directed his expedition up the Kaministiquia

River from Lake Superior and Thunder Bay, and encamped directly opposite Fort William, the citadel of his enemies. The first step was to demand the release of the Red River prisoners who were being carried away by the Nor'-Westers, and were at this point on the way to Canada. On this demand being made the leaders sent the prisoners to His Lordship's camp, and denied that they had ever arrested them.

Making use of his magistrate's commission, Lord Selkirk obtained depositions from men actually engaged in the fur trade to the effect that the partners and officers of the North-West Company were guilty of inciting opposition to the colony, and of approving the attacks made on his people. He then issued warrants against McGillivray, McKenzie, Simon Fraser, and others but allowed them to remain in Fort William. At first much liberty was given these prisoners, but on suspicion of a conspiracy arising among them, they were confined in one building.

A fuller examination having been made the guilt of the prisoners seemed clear, and three canoe loads of them were despatched eastward under guards. One of the canoes was unfortunately capsized in a storm, and one of the best known Nor'-Westers (McKenzie) was drowned.

Lord Selkirk was severely criticized in this matter. The best that can be said is that it seemed to be the fashion for each side to take advantage of

its temporary strength or opportunity to gain an advantage. Miles Macdonell was first arrested and taken to Canada by the Nor'-Westers ; then, in reprisal, Duncan Cameron was carried off to Hudson Bay ; and now the McGillivrays and Fraser—high officers—were taken captive and deported down the lake. It seems to an impartial observer like the old Scottish border feuds reduced to a science, and conducted according to the forms of law, or like the practical carrying out of Robin Hood's maxim—

> "The good old way, the simple plan
> That they should take who have the power,
> And they should keep who can."

Certainly Lord Selkirk had much provocation, and we can hardly wonder at his using his force of the De Meurons to vindicate himself and his interests.

Lord Selkirk remained at Fort William, and for the time was free of all danger from his foes. It was August, and he began to think of preparing for winter, as he could hardly expect to follow the long canoe route to Red River, and be certain of reaching his destination before winter set in, as he must take the risk of armed opposition into account. He moved his camp up the Kaministiquia River, some nine miles above Fort William, and the wintering place on the cliff overlooking the river is still known as Point De Meuron.

The usual uneventful winter on the shore of Lake Superior—where the outside world becomes

a blank—was passed by His Lordship and his followers.

In March, 1817, the De Meurons started on their journey to Red River. After leaving Lake of the Woods, they followed a route across country, in order that they might take the Nor'-Westers in Fort Douglas by surprise. This expedition was successful, and the trained soldiers without much opposition took the stronghold of the *bois-brûlés* who knew little of the real art of war.

In May Lord Selkirk started on his inland journey, and in the last week of June reached Red River and looked upon the land that had been his dream for fifteen years, ever since he had read Sir Alexander Mackenzie's book of voyages. His arrival gave instant hope for the settlement of the troubles in the North-West. The government of Canada had issued a proclamation to the effect that all property taken during the troubles should be returned to the original owners. To a certain extent the restitution took place. The settlers were brought back again from their place of refuge on Lake Winnipeg to their deserted homesteads.

On the return of the colonists they were gathered together in a sort of general council to meet their noble friend and protector. The gathering was at the spot where the burying-ground and church of St. John's are now to be seen in the northern part of the city of Winnipeg. Church and burying-ground and school were then provided for, and on the people

requesting a minister of religion to be sent them His Lordship acknowledged the obligation saying, "Selkirk never forfeited his word."

The twenty-four lots which had been occupied by the woe-begone and discouraged colonists were promised to them free of all dues. At the request of the colonists the founder gave a name to their settlement, calling their parish Kildonan from their old home in the valley of the Helmsdale in Sutherlandshire, Scotland. His Lordship ordered also a complete survey of the land to be made, and steps to be taken to lay out roads, to build bridges, and to erect mills. Report goes that old Peter Fidler, the surveyor of the company, laid out the boundaries which remain in many instances to this day.

Lord Selkirk, whom the Indians called "Silver Chief," as we have said, met them with their chiefs, and gained their complete confidence. His affability and fairness impressed the trustful redmen. The object of the treaty made with the different bands was to extinguish the Indian title. The meeting with the Indians was a memorable one. Peguis, the Saulteaux chief, made a sensible speech; the Assiniboine chief claimed His Lordship as a true friend; Robe Noire, the Ojibway, said, "We have reason to be happy to-day." From that day to this the Indian of the Red River has looked upon the white man as a brother.

Such was Lord Selkirk's noble work of pacification on the Red River. A writer of the time, speak-

ing of His Lordship, says, "Having thus restored order, infused confidence in the people, and given a certain aid to their activity, Lord Selkirk took his final leave of the colony."

Passing down the Mississippi River to St. Louis he journeyed eastward to Washington, came northward to Albany, and hastened to Upper Canada, without diverging to Montreal to visit his family, though he had not seen his wife and children for more than a year. The threatening cloud of disaster seemed dark in that direction, but he did not flinch, and pushed forward to meet it.

CHAPTER IX

WORRY AND DISASTER

THE year in which Lord Selkirk visited his colony was one of note. Sir John Coape Sherbrooke had been in constant communication with Lord Bathurst in England, but how to act and bring to an end the disgraceful state of things on British territory was the puzzle. All power in Lower Canada seemed centred in the hands of the North-West oligarchy. Lord Selkirk had appealed in vain for assistance. To get a fair-minded commissioner in Canada seemed impossible to Governor Sherbrooke. At length, W. B. Coltman, a merchant of Quebec and a lieutenant-colonel of militia, a man accustomed to government procedure, was appointed. It must be added that he was unwilling to accept the duty. With him was sent Major Fletcher, who possessed legal qualifications.

Through various delays it came about that Commissioner Coltman and his bodyguard of forty men of the 37th Foot did not reach the shores of Lake Winnipeg till July 2nd, 1817. This was only a few days after Lord Selkirk's arrival. Lord Selkirk had been represented during the past winter in Montreal as a buccaneer and a tyrant, and Colonel Coltman expected some trouble with

His Lordship. In this the commissioner found himself quite mistaken. He was so impressed with Lord Selkirk's reasonableness and good faith that he recommended that the legal charges made against him should not be proceeded with.

Colonel Coltman, after investigating affairs at Red River, made preparations for a speedy return to Canada. His sense of justice and fairness impressed men of all shades of opinion at Red River. At the mouth of the Winnipeg River he writes that he had stopped over for a time to investigate the conspiracy to destroy the Selkirk settlement in which he feared the North-West Company had been implicated. By November of 1817 Colonel Coltman had returned to Quebec, and the governor had the satisfaction of reporting to the British colonial secretary "that the general result of Colonel Coltman's exertions had been so far successful that he had restored a degree of tranquillity in the Indian territories which promises to continue during the winter."

Colonel Coltman's report of about one hundred folio pages is an admirable one. His summary of the causes and events of the great struggle between the companies is well arranged and clearly stated. Lord Selkirk, while treated impartially, appears well in the report, and the noble character of the founder shines forth undimmed.

But the cessation of hostilities, brought about by the proclamation of the king and by Coltman's visit

to the interior, did not bring a state of peace. The conflict was transferred to the courts of Upper and Lower Canada, these having been given power some time before by the imperial parliament to deal with cases in the Indian territories.

A notable trial was that of Charles Reinhart, an employé of the North-West Company, who had been a sergeant in the disbanded De Meuron regiment. Having gone to the North-West he was, during the troubles, given the charge of a Hudson's Bay Company official named Owen Keveny, the accusation against the latter being that he had maltreated a Nor'-West employé. It was charged against Reinhart that in bringing Keveny down from Lake Winnipeg to Rat Portage he had at the Falls of Winnipeg River brutally killed his prisoner.

While Lord Selkirk was at Fort William, Reinhart, having arrived at that point, made a voluntary confession before His Lordship as a magistrate. When the case came before the court in Quebec the argument of local jurisdiction was raised as to whether the Falls of Winnipeg River were in Upper Canada, Lower Canada or the Indian territories. Reinhart was found guilty, but the sentence was not carried out, probably on account of the uncertainty of the jurisdiction of the court. This case became an important precedent in recent times.

Lord Selkirk's return, and bravery in facing the charges made against him, did not in the least

moderate the opposition of his enemies of the North-West Company, but served rather to stir up their hatred. Sandwich, the extreme western point of Upper Canada, was a legal centre of some importance, and here four charges were laid against Lord Selkirk, which were very irritating to His Lordship. These were: (1) Having stolen eighty-three muskets at Fort William; (2) having riotously entered Fort William, August 13th; (3) assault and false imprisonment of Deputy-Sheriff Smith; (4) resistance to legal warrant. The first of these charges failed, though a heavy bail was kept hanging over Lord Selkirk, which was very annoying to him, but served the purposes of his enemies.

In Montreal, in 1818, an action was brought against Colin Robertson and four others for destroying Fort Gibraltar in 1815, but the charge against them was ignominiously dismissed. This was shortly followed by an action against Lord Selkirk and others for having conspired to ruin the trade of the North-West Company. This case was tried before the celebrated Chief-Justice Powell. When the grand jury refused to bring in an answer on the case, the irate chief-justice summarily adjourned the court. In the next session of the legislature of Upper Canada, of which the chief-justice was a member, legislation was passed enabling the courts to deal with the charges against Lord Selkirk. This high-handed proceeding was but in keeping with many indefensible legislative acts of Up-

per Canada in the first quarter of the nineteenth century.

This legal conspiracy succeeded. In a court held at York (Toronto), Lord Selkirk was mulcted in damages of £500 in favour of Deputy-Sheriff Smith, and £1,500 for illegal arrest and false imprisonment of McKenzie, a North-West partner at Fort William.

Lord Selkirk, with the pertinacity which characterized him, then brought charges against the murderers of Governor Semple, against a number of partners of the North-West Company as accomplices, and two other charges against some of the settlers, lured away by Duncan Cameron, for stealing His Lordship's property. In all these four cases a verdict of "Not guilty" was rendered. The evidence of these trials was published separately by the rivals, with partizan notes in each case. Upwards of three hundred pages of evidence were printed relating to the Seven Oaks affair.

Enough of this disheartening controversy! It would be idle to say that Lord Selkirk was faultless; but as we dispassionately read the accounts of the trials, and consider that while Lord Selkirk was friendless in Canada, the North-West Company had enormous influence, we cannot resist the conclusion that advantage was taken of His Lordship, and that justice was not done. It is true that in the majority of cases the conclusion was reached that it was impossible to place the blame with precision on

either side; but we cannot be surprised that Lord Selkirk, harassed and discouraged by the difficulties of the colony and his treatment in the courts of Upper and Lower Canada, should write as he did in October, 1818, to the Duke of Richmond, the new governor-general of Canada:—

"To contend alone and unsupported, not only against a powerful association of individuals, but also against all those whose official duty it should have been to arrest them in the prosecution of their crimes, was at the best an arduous task; and, however confident one might be of the intrinsic strength of his cause, it was impossible to feel a very sanguine expectation that this alone would be sufficient to bear him up against the swollen tide of corruption which threatened to overwhelm him. He knew that in persevering under existing circumstances he must necessarily submit to a heavy sacrifice of personal comfort, incur an expense of ruinous amount, and possibly render himself the object of harassing and relentless persecution."

The ferocity of spirit exhibited by the Nor'-Westers in Lower Canada and their allies, the Family Compact of Upper Canada led by the redoubtable Dr. Strachan, can hardly be believed was not the evidence overwhelming. To a man of Lord Selkirk's high ideals, it meant simply the destruction of all his hopes and plunging him into the deepest discouragement.

CHAPTER X

THE SHADOWS FALL

VERY rarely has a benefactor made his return voyage across the Atlantic Ocean so utterly cast down as Lord Selkirk was in 1818. Full of hope and determination he had, in 1815, sent out his military governor, Semple, in whom he confided much. Though full of anxiety Selkirk had nevertheless come to Montreal full of determination and resource. But now the condition of his remote and helpless colonists, the opposition of the governing powers in Canada, his expensive and discouraging lawsuits, and the mental suffering that comes to a proud spirit when it is beaten and broken—all these combined to make his return to his native land a most melancholy one.

Soon after His Lordship's return his friend, Sir James Montgomery, brought the serious features of Lord Selkirk's treatment in Canada before the British House of Commons, moving for all the official papers in the case. The motion was carried and the Bluebook—known as that of 1819—contains a storehouse of material, where the patient student may find recorded the chief facts of this long and heart-breaking struggle.

The mental condition of Lord Selkirk soon began

to prey upon his body—never very strong at the best. He sought in his overstrained state the assistance of his friends, and his self-vindication seemed to be the only topic on which his active mind spent itself.

In the year following his return from Canada, and when all about him became fearful for his health, his friend, Lady Katherine Halkett, in order to give his mind occupation and comfort, appealed to his old college friend—now become the most influential man in many ways in Scotland—Sir Walter Scott, requesting his aid in placing fairly before the world the misrepresentations of Lord Selkirk's enemies. The chivalrous Sir Walter was suffering acutely at the time, and was unable to comply with Her Ladyship's wish. The writer was fortunate in obtaining from Lord Selkirk's family (1881) a copy of the letter which Sir Walter Scott wrote in reply, and it may be well to give as much of it as bears upon the subject:—

"My Dear Lady Katherine,—I was most exceedingly indisposed when Your Ladyship's very kind letter reached me. . . . The bad news your favour conveyed with respect to my dear and esteemed friends, Lord and Lady Selkirk, did not greatly tend to raise my spirits, lowered as they were by complete exhaustion. . . . I am afraid I have already said enough to satisfy Your Ladyship how ill-qualified I am, especially at this moment, to undertake a thing of such consequence to Lord

Selkirk as a publication of his case. . . . It is most painful to me in these circumstances, my dear Lady Katherine, to feel that I should be attempting an impossibility in the wish to make myself master of the very unpleasant train of difficulties and embarrassments in which Lord Selkirk has been engaged. . . . Most devoutly do I hope that these unpleasant transactions will terminate as favourably as Lord Selkirk's ardent wish to do good, and the sound policy of his colonizing deserve ; for, as I never knew in my life a man of a more generous and disinterested disposition, or one whose talents and perseverance were better qualified to bring great and national schemes to conclusion, I have only to regret in common with his other friends the impediments that have been thrown in his way by the rapacious avarice of this great company.

"I have been three days in writing this scrawl. I cannot tell Your Ladyship how anxious I am about Lord and Lady Selkirk.

"I beg my best compliments to Mr. Halkett, and am always, with most sincere regard, Your Ladyship's most obedient and faithful servant,

"Walter Scott.

"Edinburgh, 10th June, 1819."

To see a man thus prostrate whose years—forty-eight—had scarcely brought him to his prime is sad, but kind and loving hearts supplied their sympathy and care to the sinking earl. The countess and her

young family accompanied him to the continent, and in the south of France sought the rest and pleasant surroundings that they hoped would restore him. The months dragged on without any improvement, and on April 8th, 1820, at Pau, in the department of Basses Pyrenees, in the south of France, Lord Selkirk died surrounded by his family. His bones lie in the Protestant cemetery at Orthes, in the same department.

The *Gentleman's Magazine* of 1820 gives a sketch of his life, evidently penned by a loving hand:—

"Few men were possessed of higher powers of mind, or were more capable of applying them with more indefatigable perseverance. His treatise on 'Emigration' has long been considered a standard work, and as having exhausted one of the most difficult subjects in the science of political economy. His Lordship is also advantageously known to the public as the author of some other literary productions, all of them remarkable for the enlargement and liberality of their views, the luminous perspicacity of their statements, and that severe and patient spirit of induction which delights in the pursuit and is generally successful in the discovery of truth.

"To his friends the death of this beloved and eminent person is a loss which nothing can repair. His gentle and condescending manners wound themselves round the hearts of those admitted to his society, and conciliated an attachment which

every fresh interview served to confirm. With those connected with him by the ties of kindred and the sweet relations of domestic society, His Lordship lived on terms of the most affectionate endearment; indeed, seldom has there existed a family the members of which were more tenderly attached to each other than that of which His Lordship was the head, and few families have experienced a more severe succession of those trials by which the Almighty chastens the heart and disciplines the virtues of His creatures. His Lordship was eminently exemplary in the discharge of every social and private duty. He was a considerate and indulgent landlord, a kind and gracious master; to the poor a generous benefactor, and of every public improvement a judicious and liberal patron.

"The latter years of the life of this lamented nobleman were employed in the establishment of an extensive colony in the western parts of British America. In the prosecution of this favourite object he had encountered obstacles of the most unexpected and formidable character. With these, however, he was admirably qualified to contend; to the counsels of an enlightened philosophy and an immovable firmness of purpose, he added the most complete habits of business and a perfect knowledge of affairs. The obstructions he met with served only to stimulate him to increased exertion; and after an arduous struggle with a powerful confederacy, which had arrayed itself against him, and which

would, long ere now, have subdued any other adversary, he had the satisfaction to know that he had finally succeeded in founding an industrious and thriving community. It has now struck deep root in the soil, and is competent, from its own internal resources, to perpetuate itself and to extend the blessings of civilization to those remote and boundless regions."

We add nothing. These are fitting words with which tenderly to leave the foreign grave of the founder of the Red River colony.

Lady Selkirk survived the fated earl. Their son Dunbar James Douglas succeeded his father in 1820 and died in 1885, when the title became extinct. Lady Isabella Helen, eldest daughter, married the Hon. Charles Hope, who was at one time governor of the Isle of Wight. Their son, Captain John Hope, R.N., now occupies the Selkirk family seat of St. Mary's Isle, Kircudbrightshire, Scotland. Lady Catherine Jane, second daughter, married Loftus Tottenham Wigram. The family of Earl Thomas are now all dead.

Geo Simpson

SIR GEORGE SIMPSON

CHAPTER I

DARK DAYS AND THE MAN FOR THE TIME

SOMETIMES the names of men intimately associated or diametrically opposed to one another are continually appearing together before us. It was so in the case of the two men, Sir Alexander Mackenzie and Lord Selkirk, whose careers we have been following. Of two whose lives afford a striking example of friendship it was said, "in their death they were not divided." It may be similarly remarked in regard to these two notable opponents. Mackenzie's book gave the impulse to Lord Selkirk's movement; Mackenzie's company gave the clue to Lord Selkirk for his scheme; Mackenzie was the chief opponent in the Hudson's Bay Company to the sale of territory to Lord Selkirk for his colony; under Mackenzie's silent but powerful opposition, the chief obstacles were thrown in the way of His Lordship's colonization project; and now within a month of each other the two antagonists were called away from earth's trials and rivalries, Sir Alexander dying on his way home from London, March 12th, 1820; and Lord Selkirk passing away twenty-seven days later, on April 8th, far from home, seeking health in a foreign land.

But leaving aside the personal questions at issue, and looking at the interests of the two rival companies, we readily see that their antagonism was a mistake for both; that instead of applying their energies in overcoming the forces of nature in their trade they had wasted them in bitterness and hostility to one another. This was recognized by both companies as soon as the heat of passion began to die down, after the action of the imperial government and the timely visit of Colonel Coltman to the scene of conflict. Two years had elapsed since the return of Lord Selkirk from America. As is usually the case some of those who had stood sullenly in the background during the painful conflict now raised their voices in favour of peace.

The chief agent in a movement towards reconciliation was Edward Ellice. His father and the two sons were known as the "bear and cubs" by the old Hudson's Bay Company people. One would say that, if this comparison were well chosen, Edward Ellice would hardly be the man for a peacemaker. His father, however, had large financial interests in the fur trade, and the son had gone from England to Canada in 1803. The young trader passed through the stirring days when the new North-West Company or X. Y. was, by its ruinous policy of using strong drink in trade and of sending aggressive traders everywhere, making the fur trade unprofitable. He had seen the union of the old and new North-West Companies in

which brothers had been divided, and chief friends thrown into hostile camps. He had seen that breach closed and those wounds completely healed.

Fifteen or sixteen years had passed since that time, and Ellice advocated, under the circumstances similar to those of the earlier date, that the two great companies which had been fighting a battle royal should lay down their arms and be friends. He urged strongly the plea of self-interest. Both companies were reduced to the verge of bankruptcy. He pointed out that there was great extravagance in the conduct of trade. Two rival traders, outbidding each other, gave more for the furs than they were worth, simply to gain the victory over each other. Often two traders were stationed where the catch of furs was limited, and both establishments at the close of the year showed a serious shortage. The necessity of watching rivals, of ascertaining their plans, and of counterworking opposing movements caused a great loss of time, and so a loss of money and of prestige.

The Indians were irritated by the varying standard of values in trade caused by unhealthy competion, and their relatives, the half-breeds, were in sympathy with them, while the half-breeds of the plains, mostly French and belonging to the North-West Company, were an excitable element at any time, ready to break the peace and create trouble in the country.

Thus jealousy, overtrading, loss of time, too great

an extension of agencies, and carelessness of management had, even before Lord Selkirk came upon the scene, led to a loss of money and to the decay of the companies. It was said that it was the low rate to which the stock of the Hudson's Bay Company had fallen that induced Lord Selkirk to buy into the company for the purpose of furthering his emigration scheme.

The massacre of a British officer and his staff to the number of upwards of twenty, cultivated and useful men, by a half-breed band on the plains of Rupert's Land, where for a century and a half the Hudson's Bay Company had ruled, and where for fifty years the shrewd Scottish sense of the Montreal traders had prevented more than an occasional death by violence, startled the imperial government into activity. Lord Bathurst, hearing of Edward Ellice's plan, sent for the peacemaker, heard his views, and adopted the method suggested. He promised to unite the companies by statute if they could but make a financial adjustment between themselves.

The propounder of the plan, encouraged by the promise given by the government, undertook amid numberless prophecies of failure to bring together the hostile elements. Mr. Ellice gives an account of his difficult work in the evidence taken before the Parliamentary Committee of the British House of Commons in 1857.

The agreement, reached after much discussion,

was entered into on March 26th, 1821. It provided that the two companies should share equally the profits of trade for twenty-one years, each company furnishing an equal amount of capital. The whole stock was divided into one hundred shares, forty of which were to be distributed among the wintering partners, as the traders actually engaged in Rupert's Land were called.

In order to preserve the rights of both parties the new Act provided for the appointment and specified the duties of new officials. The governor and directors of the new Hudson's Bay Company were given power to appoint district governors, who were to preside at meetings of chief factors, and three chief factors were necessary to constitute a council. Twenty-five chief factors and twenty-eight chief traders were provided for, to be taken alternately from the two companies. The forty shares to be divided among the wintering partners were divided into eighty-five parts, and to each chief trader was given a one-eighty-fifth share, while each chief factor owned two eighty-fifths. The remaining seven shares were divided among old and deserving members of both companies. The Act provided for a license to be given to the company to trade in the territories outside the original Hudson's Bay Company's territory as far west as the Rocky Mountains, but did not include the Pacific slope. The license granted was to be renewed every twenty-one years.

The Act which accomplished the union, which

was often called the coalition, was passed on July 2nd, 1821. Provision was made for trying minor offences by local magistrates, but criminal cases involving capital punishment and civil suits of over £200, were to be brought for trial before the courts of Upper Canada.

But the real work of reconciliation was not to be accomplished by passing equitable Acts of parliament, or by bestowing fair salaries upon the partners. It needed a man of the right stamp to unify and moderate the opposing members. What qualifications should such a man have? He needed to be young and independent, not having strong affiliations with either party, and yet a man of intellect, of position, and of attractive manner to hold the respect of shrewd, experienced factors and traders. He must be of British rather than Canadian antecedents in order that the older company might be satisfied, and yet preferably a man of Scottish origin to gain the confidence of the strong Celtic element which largely made up the North-West Company of Montreal. To have visited the fur country was a necessity, and yet not to have there lost his business habits as so many of the older traders who had lived long at the remoter posts had done. A man, he must be, of quick perception, affable manners, patient temper, good judgment, and of natural astuteness. Was such a catalogue of virtues and habits to be found in any one man? It seemed very unlikely.

In the year before the coalition a young man had been sent from the London office of the Hudson's Bay Company in Fenchurch Street by Andrew Colville, Lord Selkirk's brother-in-law, to watch over the fur-trading interests of the Hudson's Bay Company in far-distant Athabaska, where shrewdness and decision were needed, if anywhere. This was George Simpson. His birth might have been urged against him, but subtle minds might prove that it gave him an advantage in the trying and thankless position to which he was called. It has been shown that William the Conqueror, the Duke of Monmouth, and others who had the bar sinister across their escutcheons, developed enormous powers of pluck and determination. So it was with George Simpson, who was the uncle of Thomas Simpson, the Arctic explorer. His strong, clear intellect, high animal spirits, well-knit, broad-chested frame, compact height—five feet and seven inches—plausible tongue, and affable disposition—all these with, perhaps, the added consciousness that he must depend entirely on his own exertions, made him a man surprisingly fitted for the work of directing the great enterprise in the hands of the Hudson's Bay Company.

He had come to the fur country in 1820, and in that year arrived on Lake Athabaska with fifteen loaded canoes. Like Sir James Douglas on the other side of the Rocky Mountains, Simpson seemed to

grasp the situation at once, and his resource and courage were shown immediately. He reached out as far as Peace River. Whether he ever visited Great Slave Lake is not known. His account of his winter spent in Athabaska is interesting :—

"At some seasons both whites and Indians live in wasteful abundance on venison, buffalo meat, fish and game of all kinds, while, at other times, they are reduced to the last degree of hunger, often passing several days without food. In the year 1820 our provisions fell short at the establishment, and on two or three occasions I went for two or three whole days and nights without having a single morsel to swallow, but then, again, I was one of a party of eleven men and one woman which discussed at one sitting meal no less than three ducks and twenty-two geese." Thus was concentrated in one season an experience valuable to the future governor.

The young governor immediately braced himself to his great work. The union of Hudson's Bay Company traders with Nor'-Westers changed the centre of gravity of the trade, and Norway House on the north side of Lake Winnipeg took the place of Grand Portage or Fort William where the Nor'-Westers were wont to assemble. In later years Governor Simpson was accused of being arbitrary and dictatorial, but at the early meetings held at Norway House he won golden opinions for his affability and fairness. The work of every dis-

trict was reported on; and the new governor at once, by his diplomacy and shrewdness, took his place among these wily old traders of the west, able to baffle Indian cunning and deceit, and showing himself a thorough leader of men.

As we shall see he was imperious on the route. He was as "furious as Jehu" in his driving, but it was men, not horses, he impelled to swift action. The story was prevalent a generation ago on Red River that on one of his voyages, in crossing the Lake of the Woods, the impetuous governor was urging forward his favourite French *voyageur* with such unreason that the stalwart boatman, it is said, seized his tormentor by the shoulder, and plunged him into the lake, to draw him out quickly, wet and dripping, suiting his action with an emphatic oath.

With great rapidity and yet with business tact Governor Simpson reduced to order the chaotic affairs of the two companies. Learning from the assembled chief factors at Norway House the nature of the trade at every point, a radical policy was pursued of cutting down establishments, withdrawing from unremunerative points, distributing the money influence to better advantage, conciliating the hostile and encouraging the discouraged. In every corner of the wide region of Rupert's Land as well as in the valleys and shores of British Columbia, was felt the power of this predominating personality, from the very moment of his laying his hand upon the helm.

Complaints no doubt were heard from time to time, some of the older officers left the company, many gave vent to bitter feelings. A good writer among the traders, Ferdinand Wentzler, wrote in 1824: "The North-West is now beginning to be ruled with a rod of iron." It was natural that there should be discontented ones, but this adverse opinion serves to show that Governor Simpson was a living, energizing fact in the wide-spread affairs of the company. We shall follow this man of iron will and shrewd diplomatic faculty through the mazes of business in which he distinguished himself for nearly forty years, while he upheld the dignity and usefulness of the high office to which he had been called.

CHAPTER II

THE MEN HE LED

IT is usual to make great movements in the world depend on the trusted leader who inspires courage, and points the way to other men. Thomas Carlyle's doctrine of heroes is a very simple way of accounting for human progress. Great leaders themselves, however, are the first to point out how much they depend for their success on the faith, honour, and ability of their subordinates, and to cast doubt on Carlyle's philosophy. Especially in the case of Governor Simpson was this so. He was young, unacquainted with the fur trade, and in a remarkable degree dependent on those leaders in the company who had tramped the winter snows and stood up for their own party in Rupert's Land, the Indian territories, and New Caledonia.

The band of twenty-five chief factors and twenty-eight chief traders, chosen half and half from each of the uniting companies, made up half a hundred men whose knowledge, experience, courage, and zeal could hardly be surpassed. With a sprinkling of Englishmen and a few Irish these select leaders of the fur trade were chiefly Scotsmen, who, with executive ability and power of adaptation, upheld

the reputation of their countrymen for sagacity and trustworthiness. It may be worth while to look at some of these leaders and their achievements as they aided the young governor in bringing order out of the chaos into which conflict had thrown the companies.

Chief among the chief factors was Colin Robertson, who had been a Nor'-Wester at first, but who had entered the service of the Hudson's Bay Company under Lord Selkirk's direction to forward the interests of the colony. Robertson, while somewhat irascible, was a useful and competent man. His appointment augured well for a friendly attitude towards the Red River colonists on the part of the new company, and was a pledge that the interests of the English company would not be swamped by the aggressive traders from Montreal.

Another chief factor of peculiarly picturesque and notable mien was John McLaughlin. His part was chiefly played west of the Rocky Mountains in the Oregon district. Edward Ellice, the peacemaker between the companies, said of McLaughlin, "Dr. McLaughlin was rather an ambitious and independent personage. He was a very able man, and, I believe, a very good man. . . . While he remained with the Hudson's Bay Company he was an excellent servant." McLaughlin was fond of show, and his distinguished manner is said to have impressed Governor Simpson. A trader's journal is worth quoting: "McLaughlin and his suite would

sometimes accompany the south-bound expeditions from Fort Vancouver, in regal state, for fifty or one hundred miles up the Willamette, when he would dismiss them with his blessing, and return to the fort. He did not often travel and seldom far; but on these occasions he indulged his men rather than himself in some little variety. . . . It pleased Mrs. McLaughlin thus to break the monotony of her fort life. Upon a gaily-caparisoned steed, with silver trappings and strings of bells on bridle reins and saddle skirt, sat the lady of Fort Vancouver, herself arrayed in brilliant colours, and wearing a smile which might cause to blush and hang its head the broadest, warmest, and most fragrant sunflower. By her side, also gorgeously attired, rode her lord, king of the Columbia, and every inch a king, attended by a train of trappers, under a chief trader, each upon his best behaviour."

Further north in New Caledonia proper, as the district to the west of the Rocky Mountains had been named by the enterprising Scotsmen from Montreal, Chief Factor John Stuart made a name for himself. Near the beginning of the nineteenth century, John Stuart, as lieutenant of Simon Fraser, made one of the most notable and difficult journeys of exploration recorded, in his descent of the Fraser River from its source in Stuart's Lake, so called from this trader, to a few miles from its entrance into the Pacific Ocean. John Stuart, though second in command of the expedition, was

versed in engineering and was a more cultivated man than his leader, Simon Fraser. He is generally believed to have been the brain of the enterprise. Stuart was a man of much information and literary tastes. Far up in the fastnesses of the Rocky Mountains he kept in touch with the important new books, and from his lofty standpoint discoursed upon the amenities of literature in correspondence with his fellow-traders of kindred tastes.

Foremost among the chief factors under the new organization were Donald McKenzie, a man of affairs, and Alexander Christie, who had a diplomatic and kindly spirit. Both of these men rose still higher in the service of the company, becoming governors of the colony of Assiniboia. Some dozen years after the union of the companies, it became evident that the Hudson's Bay Company should relieve Lord Selkirk's heirs of the responsibility of maintaining the colony. During eight years of this time Governor McKenzie ruled as well as the troublous times would permit. When a settlement was reached with Lord Selkirk's representatives, Alexander Christie, who had succeeded Governor McKenzie, became the official governor of Selkirk colony, under the general control of Governor Simpson.

Many schemes for the agricultural development of the Red River colony had been tried during the transition period after Lord Selkirk's death until 1835, but they had failed, and this chiefly through

mismanagement. The Hudson's Bay Company now found it necessary to supersede the patriarchal form of government, and to give a semblance of representative government.

The council of Assiniboia was a partly successful ruling body, though in its later years unpopular, largely because it was said to reflect the company's rather than the popular opinion. Governor Christie was the first governor of Assiniboia who had a regular council to assist him. The council included fifteen members, Governor Simpson was president but Governor Christie the local head of the body. This council included the leading clergy, retired fur traders, merchants, and settlers of the colony. Chief Factor Christie served his first period as governor for six years, and after an interval another period of two years.

Thus among the twenty-five chief factors and twenty-eight chief traders we might go on selecting men worthy of notice. Time would fail to tell all their notable exploits. James Bird retired to settle in the colony and became a member of influence in the council of Assiniboia. Edward Smith became a dominant figure in the far Mackenzie River district. Chief Factor George Keith, who passed most of his life in Athabaska, Mackenzie River, and Great Bear Lake, wrote a series of most interesting letters, embodying a number of Indian tales; his brother James was also a leading chief factor who lived in later years at Lachine.

Chief Factor James Leith will long be remembered. In his will less than twenty years after the coalition of the companies he left £12,000 to be expended for the benefit of the Indian missions of Rupert's Land. His relatives bitterly opposed this bequest, but the case was decided against them, and the interest of this amount, with £300 a year given by the Hudson's Bay Company, now goes as an annual income of £700 to the bishopric of Rupert's Land. So much for the leaders at the time of the union.

As years quickly passed new men rose to take the place of the retiring chief factors and to give Governor Simpson their assistance. To name a few of these is but fair.

In 1825 William Connolly became chief factor. He was notable in the district west of the Rocky Mountains, New Caledonia, being in charge of Fort St. James. Married to an Indian wife, his large family grew up to be well educated and notable. One of his daughters became Lady Douglas, the wife of Sir James Douglas of Victoria, British Columbia.

On William Connolly leaving the heights of the Rocky Mountains, he was succeeded in the charge of his post by Peter Warren Dease, who became chief factor in 1828. Dease was very celebrated in his notable expedition with Thomas Simpson, a relation of Governor Simpson. They were sent out by the Hudson's Bay Company to explore, in 1837,

the coast of the Arctic Sea, and performed the duties assigned to them with much success.

Duncan Finlayson became a chief factor in 1832, and seven years later began his five years of service as governor of Assiniboia. The reign of Governor Finlayson is treasured in the memory of the people of the Red River Settlement as that of an ideal governor. Ross says of him: "A man of business habits, liberal principles, and strictly just, he knew nothing of party and its objects, but at once took his position in the interests of all, and especially as the friend of the poor." This is a most desirable record for a public man to leave behind him.

But among all those called to his councils by Governor Simpson, the man possessed of the highest qualities as an administrator was James Douglas, afterwards Sir James, who eventually became a chief factor. Douglas was a man of imperial mind, and his fame stands high on the Pacific coast today. Born near the beginning of the century, a scion of the noble house of Douglas, James Douglas joined the North-West Company as a lad, and, going west, was soon taken by Dr. McLaughlin to the Pacific slope. At Fort St. James he learned the Indian languages with the same facility as he had mastered French, and soon among the wild tribes of the Upper Rockies showed his ability in managing men. He married Nellie Connolly, a native girl of sixteen, daughter of Trader Connolly.

He rose with marvellous rapidity in the service, and was made chief factor in 1840. It was said of him: "He was one of the most enterprising and inquisitive of men, famous for his intimate acquaintance with every service of the coast." He became governor of Vancouver Island in 1851, was knighted in 1863, and continued governor of the island as well as of the mainland of British Columbia.

It is impossible even to mention the names of all who were high in favour as trusted councillors of Governor Simpson during his many years of service. The appointments to the annual council, usually held at Norway House, were generally made at the governor's suggestion. This tended to make his position somewhat difficult, by spreading the impression that he was the fur-trading autocrat, an impression, indeed, which a close reading of the records will not fail to confirm.

Men are at times raised to positions of importance largely on account of what seem to be accidental circumstances. An instance of this is seen in the case of James Hargrave. He was for years the officer in charge of York Factory, on Hudson Bay, which was the *entrepôt* of Rupert's Land. Orders from traders and others for their supplies poured in to Hargrave, who had goods bought and forwarded inland by the annual ship as it arrived at York Factory from Britain.

A strong friend of Hargrave's at Red River Settlement was the Rev. William Cochrane, the

stalwart missionary who really laid the foundations of the Church of England in Rupert's Land. The forces at work in making chief factors are shown by him in a letter to Hargrave. After years of service at York Factory, Hargrave thought, and so did his friends, that he was deserving of the honour of promotion from the position of *bourgeois* to that of chief trader, and after that chief factor. The chief tradership was long in coming. Before it came Cochrane wrote to him of his expectation that the governor would grant it. Disappointed in one year he writes in the next: "Are you likely to get another feather in your cap? I begin to think that your name will have to be changed into MacArgrave. A 'Mac' before your name would produce a greater effect than all the rest of your merits put together. Can't you demonstrate that you are one of the descendants of one of the great clans?" But the governor did not forget, for in 1833 Hargrave was made chief trader and eleven years afterwards chief factor.

John Siveright, George Barnston, and John Ballenden were all men who as letter writers, prominent traders, and able men rose to the highest places of distinction in the service.

One most notable man whose name cannot be passed by is that of the trader and explorer, Dr. John Rae, who became a chief factor in 1850. Dr. Rae's chief distinction was his daring and success in coasting up the west shore of Hudson Bay,

chiefly without carrying a supply train. He found traces of the remains of Sir John Franklin, and obtained half the reward offered by the British government for traces of the lost explorer. Dr. Rae was a man of scientific tastes and most active mind, and to the day of his death retained an enthusiastic interest in Rupert's Land.

William McTavish, who reached the height of ambition of every fur trader, was appointed chief factor in 1851, and became the last governor of Assiniboia under the Hudson's Bay Company régime He was a man of force of character, though he fell on evil times in the troublous years of 1869 and 1870.

The region of Labrador knew well the distinguished services of Donald A. Smith, now Lord Strathcona, for more than twenty years under Governor Simpson's rule, though he was not made chief factor until the year after the death of the great governor.

Robert Campbell, a Perthshire Highlander, for more than thirty years a favourite of the governor, noted as the discoverer of the Upper Yukon, and John McIntyre, master of Fort William, a devoted follower of the governor, both rose, some years after Sir George's death, to high rank in the company.

These are some of the men—not by any means all who should be mentioned—who supported Governor Simpson and helped to make his administration strong. Many of their names have been

given to posts, or forts, or lakes, or capes in the wide extent of Rupert's Land. They were chiefly noted for their uprightness and trustworthiness. Among the Indians, when there was no military or police force, no law or civil authority, it was found that the probity and faithfulness of the fur trader was the chief power in promoting order and good-will among the native peoples. The Hudson's Bay Company's officers and men gained the reputation of being keen traders not to be trifled with, and yet fair men who would not take undue advantage in a bargain. Governor Simpson had, on the whole, a trustworthy band of men to lead, and this largely accounted for his success.

CHAPTER III

THE DOMAIN OF AN EMPEROR

GOVERNOR SIMPSON had a remarkable faculty of adapting himself to his surroundings, and soon caught the spirit of the fur traders. He was far from being a mere money-maker—a business automaton. He was fond of the social life which had been developed in the precincts of the Hudson's Bay Company's posts. New Year's Day, St. Andrew's Day, and probably other notable days were observed, and the Indians, only too prone to indulge their idle habits, were glad to fall in with such cheerful interruptions to the monotony of life.

On these holidays and especially for the week between Christmas and the New Year, there was at times too great a tendency to indulgence. But Governor Simpson was in thorough harmony with the fur traders' customs. No doubt he found it necessary to maintain an attitude of strict opposition to the use of strong drink in dealing with the Indians, but with the occasional relaxation of rules at set times he was in perfect sympathy.

This dual character in the governor also showed itself in business matters. He was a keen business man. Before his time, in the conflict of the com-

panies, business had languished and both companies suffered heavy loss. New establishments had been built out of pure rivalry, and many of them were far from paying for themselves. With remorseless exactness and thoroughness Governor Simpson dealt with these, closed them, reduced their expenditure, or reorganized their methods. But with all this there was in the governor an unusual love of pomp and show. This was a very valuable element in impressing the Indian imagination, and could have been justified on business grounds, but it was with the governor rather a piece of thorough enjoyment—a survival of his boyish nature, when, with the aid of decorated canoes and flags and music, he disported himself in the pageants of the traders.

In the seventh year of his governorship he made a notable voyage through his fur-trading domain from York Factory to Fort Vancouver on the Columbia River. It is fortunate for us that there was with the governor a gentleman, Archibald Macdonald, who had the "pen of a ready writer," and who has left us a most readable description of the journey in a small work entitled, "Peace River; a Canoe Voyage from the Hudson Bay to the Pacific."

The departure of the expedition on its transcontinental trip was a great event at York Factory. Two light canoes were very thoroughly fitted up for the journey—tents for camping, utensils for the

camp-fire, arms to meet any danger, provisions in plenty, wine for the gentlemen and spirits for the *voyageurs*. Each canoe carried nine picked men, and from Governor Simpson's reputation as a swift traveller it was quite understood that their lot would not be an easy one.

On July 28th, 1828, fourteen chief officers—factors and traders—and an equal number of clerks were gathered together at the Factory to inaugurate the great voyage. The event had gathered the whole Indian community about the posts, and probably no greater spectacle had taken place at York Factory since Miles Macdonell and his Scottish settlers, nearly twenty years before, had started for their new home on the Red River. Hayes River resounded with the cheers of the assembled traders and their dependents, while a salute of seven guns made the fir trees of the northern station re-echo with the din. The *voyageurs* then gave in unison one of the famous boat-songs for which they are noted, and with pomp and circumstance began their journey.

The long progress of hundreds of miles from the Factory to the outlet of Lake Winnipeg was made with lightheartedness and marvellous speed. Near the foot of Lake Winnipeg is situated Norway House, which at the time was the virtual capital of the fur traders. The approach to this point was made an event of great importance. The fort, though simply a dépôt of the fur trade, had a

number of Indian settlements within reach, and all the denizens of the region were on tip-toe to see the pageant which they knew was approaching. Indian warriors and trappers were there in large numbers; the lordly redman was accompanied on all his journeys by his whole family, so that bevies of old and young women peered upon the scene from the background, while groups of Indian children with their accustomed shyness stood awe-struck at the spectacle. The "Kitche Okema" —the greatest mortal they had ever seen—was coming.

The party from York Factory had begun already to show marks of their voyage, and so they landed some miles away from the fort, performed their toilets and arranged their attire as best they could. Fully ready they resumed the journey, and with flashing paddles sped through the rocky gorge by which Norway House is reached, quickly turned the point, came in sight of the fort built on a slope rising from the lake, and saw floating from the tall flagstaff of Norway pine on the top of Signal Hill the Union Jack with the letters H. B. C.,—the flag which had a magical effect on every trader and Indian as he beheld it flying aloft.

The governor's gaudily painted canoe was easily discernible by its high prow, on which sat the French-Canadian guide, who for the time being, as pilot, had chief authority. The governor looked on with interest, while from his immediate neighbour-

hood in his canoe pealed forth the music of the bagpipes, as well suited for effect on the rocky ledges surrounding Norway House as for the fastnesses of the governor's native land. From the second canoe rang out the cheery bugle of the senior chief factor, who was really in command of the expedition.

As the canoes came near the shore the effect was heightened by the soft and lively notes of the French-Canadian *voyageurs*, who were always great favourites of the governor. The song they sang in French was one that never becomes wearisome—that of "*A La Claire Fontaine.*" The leader carolled the solo:—

"A la claire fontaine
M'en allant promener,
J'ai trouvé l'eau si belle
Que je m'y suis baigné."

And then all joined in chorus—

"Il y a longtemps que je t'aime
Jamais je ne t'oublierai."

The reception over, the governor at once proceeded to the duties of his office and examined the details of the work of the fort.

A large correspondence had met him at Norway House. To despatch this and examine the prospects of trade at the place was a work into which the governor entered with the greatest gusto. All officers and employés appeared before him; the buildings, books, trade, and outlook were all inspected

or considered, and this man of lordly tastes was found to be possessed of an iron will and keen business acumen. His rapidity in despatching business was so great that it was said he could do the work of three ordinary men.

The long journey of a thousand or more miles from Norway House to Fort Chipewyan, into the detail of which we cannot enter, was accomplished by rapid transit, interruptions only being made to examine minutely the affairs of Cumberland, Carlton, Edmonton, and a score of minor points along the route.

Fort Chipewyan had always maintained its preeminence as an important dépôt of the fur trade. The governor had spent his one year as a clerk within its precincts. He now returned to it with his new rank as a potentate having power to make or unmake men. Its picturesque position as well as historic memories appealed directly to him. Here he met the officer in charge, William McGillivray, whose name was a great one among the Nor'-Westers, the original chief of that name, after whom Fort William was called, having died three years before this voyage took place. McGillivray, at the invitation of the governor, taking his family with him, joined the party in crossing the Rocky Mountains.

The same waving of flags, firing of guns, shouting of Indians and employés, and the sound of singing and bagpipes which had attended the arri-

val and departure of the distinguished travellers at Norway House were repeated at Fort Chipewyan. A little more than a month had passed from the time of their leaving York Factory when the travellers entered Peace River in order to cross the Rocky Mountains. As Forts Vermilion, Dunvegan, and St. John were passed, the most important fact pressed on the members of the expedition was the lack of provisions. This was a year of unusual dearth in the whole region as far as Fort McLeod, which lay west of the summit of the mountains.

At the various stopping-places the governor, besides examining into the financial prospects and management of each fort, was called upon to settle disputes. This His Excellency did with the same distinguished success with which he accomplished all his other duties. Presiding with the air of a chief-justice, he gave caution and advice in the most impressive manner, and with due solemnity he lectured the Indians for their orgies and for the scenes of violence which often followed them.

In passing from Fort McLeod to Fort St. James the journey was made across the crest of the Rocky Mountains, the *voyageurs* carrying the baggage on their shoulders, while horses were provided for the gentlemen of the party. Fort St. James being the emporium of the fur trade for New Caledonia, was a place of note, and the entry to it was made as splendid as circumstances would permit. The journal says :—"Unfurling the British ensign it was

given to the guide, who marched first. After him came the band, consisting of buglers and bagpipers. Next came the governor, mounted, and behind him Dr. Hamlyn, the physician, and Macdonald, the scribe, also on horses. Twenty men, loaded like beasts of burden, formed the line; after them a loaded horse; and finally McGillivray with his wife and family brought up the rear."

Thus arranged, the imposing body was put in motion. Passing over a gentle elevation, they came into full view of the fort, when the bugle sounded, a gun was fired, and the bagpipes struck up the famous march of the clans, "Si coma leum codagh na sha" (If you will it, war). Trader James Douglas, who was in charge of the fort, replied with small ordnance and guns, after which he advanced and received the distinguished visitors in front of the fort.

Descending from the crest of the Rocky Mountains, by September 24th the party came to Fort Alexandria—named after Sir Alexander Mackenzie—four days down the Fraser River, and then reached Kamloops, the junction of the North and South Thompson Rivers. At every place of importance the governor took occasion to assemble the natives and employés and gave them good advice, "exhorting them to honesty, frugality, temperance," finishing his prelections with a gift of tobacco or some commodity appreciated by them.

After a rapid descent of the Fraser River the

party reached Fort Langley near its mouth, in two days less than three months from the time of their starting from York Factory. From this point Governor Simpson made his way to Fort Vancouver, on the Columbia River, then the chief post on the Pacific coast, and in the following year returned over the mountains, satisfied that he had gained much knowledge and that he had impressed himself on trader, *engagé*, and Indian chief alike.

CHAPTER IV

AS CIVIL RULER

IN less than twenty years Governor Simpson had gained complete leadership of the Hudson's Bay Company, and his word had become law. This arose not from a mere autocratic disposition on his part, but from the recognition of his wisdom and ability in London and in the vast western territory. The governor, while visiting his wide domain every year, made his headquarters in Lachine, near Montreal, and thus became acquainted with Canadian life. In this way Governor Simpson became the exponent of the best traditions and opinions of the old Nor'-Westers as well as the embodiment of the interests of the directors in London, whom he visited as often as possible. His influence in Canadian affairs became very considerable. Many of the retired traders lived in Montreal and along the St. Lawrence and Ottawa rivers, forming a sort of guild of their own, and the governor naturally became the leader of this wealthy and influential set. The old days of the Beaver Club were kept alive to some extent at Lachine,

Troublous days fell upon both Upper and Lower Canada in the third decade of the century. The French in Lower Canada were dissatisfied with the

oligarchy which governed them, for up to this time Britain had not trusted the French-Canadians to govern themselves. In Upper Canada the Family Compact, a combination of placemen, governed the province without regard for the interests or will of the masses of the people. These conditions led to the unfortunate rebellion of 1837–8. Papineau in Lower Canada and William Lyon Mackenzie in Upper Canada headed the revolt. No doubt the state of things in the two provinces justified great discontent, and the two sets of placemen were responsible for the evils which an oppressed people rose to overthrow. It is questionable, however, whether the evils could not have been remedied without the dreadful alternative of an appeal to arms. Of course the Hudson's Bay Company, its officers, and retired partners and men were a part of the system of oligarchy, and threw in their lot with the government as determined loyalists.

This was not surprising. The Hudson's Bay Company was a chartered company, and of old standing. All such organizations have their very life in the favour of the state, and are disposed to support the interests of capital as against the rights claimed by the people. It is probably a good feature of the British constitution that there are bodies which stand for law, order, and stability when popular tumult threatens to overturn and destroy established institutions. Nevertheless, popular government demands, and rightly, that equity

and fair play be meted out to all classes of the people.

The interests represented by Governor Simpson in Montreal were strongly united against the Papineau rebellion. That rebellion was soon suppressed by the force of the regular soldiery, aided by the lack of coherence in the rebel party and the natural differences arising among its chiefs. Furthermore, there was a settled conviction in the minds of the French people that the British government, which had been their friend after the conquest in 1759, would in the present crisis accord them justice. It was the wheel of government nearest them which they wished to destroy, not the force which supplied guidance to the larger mechanism.

The rebellion over, the usual British process of examining into the grievances which had caused the outbreak took place. Lord Durham came to Canada, and with his liberal instincts, recommended a course of legislation which gave the people the rights they so strongly demanded. Lord Durham's visit to Canada was one of the most fortunate things in the history of British North America. The policy of rewarding those who had stood true to British interests, and also of redressing the grievances which unquestionably existed, healed the serious breach which was threatened both in Upper and Lower Canada.

The part taken during the rebellion by Governor Simpson, as well as the successful exploration of

the Arctic coast at this time by Dease and Simpson at the governor's suggestion, was duly rewarded, in 1839, by the order of knighthood.

It is questionable whether the events through which Governor Simpson passed during the rebellion were favourable to the best interests of civil government in Rupert's Land. As we have seen, in 1835 a council was established for the government of Assiniboia—as the Red River Settlement was officially called—and Governor Simpson was the head of this council. The fact that its members were all appointed by the Hudson's Bay Company in London, though many of them were natural leaders of the people, was likely to rouse a feeling of antagonism, and, on however small a scale, to array the masses against the classes. The officers and retired officers of the Hudson's Bay Company with the privileged clergy certainly dominated. It was probably an unfortunate thing that Governor Simpson, while this new body was becoming fixed in its attitude towards the hitherto ungoverned people of Red River, should have been placed in antagonism to the aggressive movement of Papineau and the French-Canadian malcontents. The suppression of the rebels, the banishment of a number of them, the feeling of victory, the increasing sentiment of loyalty, and the personal reward of knighthood no doubt influenced Sir George and increased in him the feeling of the autocrat, however much this may have been

held in check by his natural good feeling and sense of diplomacy.

That our estimate is not a wrong one may be seen in his action in more fully organizing the judicial staff of the colony, and in his choice of an occupant for the high office of recorder. A young Scottish lawyer in Montreal, named Adam Thom, had taken a noted part in journalism in Montreal during the Papineau rising. Papineau in a moment of passion had declared: "The time has gone by when Europe could give monarchs to America. The epoch is approaching when America will give republics to Europe." Young Thom, with true British fervour, resented such disloyal sentiments, and entered the lists with a series of newspaper letters, signed "Camillus," which were remembered for many a day for their anti-French tone and for their forcefulness.

When the rebellion was over, Lord Durham came, as we have seen, to Canada, bringing with him an exceptionally brilliant staff of assistants. To these he added the powerful young controversialist, Adam Thom, who was versed in Lower Canadian affairs. In 1838 Thom returned with Lord Durham to Britain, and in 1839, the year in which Governor Simpson was knighted, Thom was appointed by the Hudson's Bay Company, at a salary of £700 a year, the first recorder of Red River, or as he was also styled, president of the Red River court. The new recorder came

from Britain by way of New York, and proceeded at once to Fort Garry.

The fourth decade of the century saw Sir George with his aristocratic notions presiding over the council of Assiniboia. His policy of government was, to a certain extent, affected by the influence of the new recorder, who was also a member of the council.

At present the details of the irritation in Red River Settlement are not of importance to our description of Governor Simpson's work as a civil ruler. Suffice it to say that Recorder Thom's influence was felt in restrictions made upon the settlers in their dealing in furs, of which trade the company claimed the exclusive right, and certain regulations of an onerous kind as to letters sent by post from the settlement. Governor Simpson, with great wisdom, allowed all these annoying ordinances to come by way of proclamation from the local governor, Christie, but was no doubt to a certain extent responsible for them. Towards the end of the decade the ferment reached its height in an *émeute* on the part of the Métis, or French half-breeds on the Red River, in which they released from prison one of their compatriots and defied the authorities.

At Governor Simpson's suggestion, Recorder Thom did not take his place upon the bench for a year. Then the recorder, at the instance of Sir George, again presided at a case which gave rise to

popular discontent, and again the governor was compelled to consent to the cessation of his judicial functions. He allowed Judge Thom, however, to serve as clerk of the court, which he did until 1854 when he retired to Britain. During this decade in which Recorder Thom seems to have been the "stormy petrel" of the Red River Settlement, Governor Simpson acted with diplomatic discretion. The troubles culminating in 1849 led to the appointment of a local governor in Red River Settlement, who was not necessarily to be an officer of the fur trade. Sir George Simpson retired from the active administration of affairs in the colony. He was, however, when present, the superior officer, having precedence of the governor at Fort Garry.

Notwithstanding all this, Sir George's visits to Fort Garry or Lower Fort Garry were always notable events. He seems still to have been regarded as the source of ultimate authority in time of difficulty. To all he was accessible. Visits of respect were paid to him by the leading residents on his arrival in the colony, and he no doubt oiled the wheels of government by his skill and good sense.

Sir George during his long career largely kept in his own hand the dealings with the clergy, who received from the Hudson's Bay Company certain grants and support for education and also for church service, and as a rule he satisfied this important class, although he often rallied them in a jocular way for not being as self-denying and devoted to

their tasks as he professed to think they ought to be. On the whole, during his administration of civil affairs in Rupert's Land, especially in the Red River Settlement, a period of nearly forty years, he was regarded as a fair and reasonable man, though credited with being rather astute or even adroit in his management.

CHAPTER V

A JOURNEY ROUND THE WORLD

THE desire to extend the business of the Hudson's Bay Company, and also to see a region, that of Siberia, that resembled his own empire of Rupert's Land, led Sir George Simpson, in the second year after he was knighted, to undertake a journey round the world. This was a very different thing from the Drake or Cook voyages, "ploughing a furrow" round the world by sea. It was really a journey over three continents in addition to crossing the two greatest oceans of the earth.

Two portly volumes containing an account of his voyage, filling nine hundred pages, appeared some five years after this journey was completed. This work is given in the first person as a recital by Sir George of what he saw and passed through. Internal evidence as well as local report on the Red River show another hand to have been concerned in giving it a literary form. It is reported that the facile assistant to the busy governor was Judge Thom, the industrious and strong-minded recorder of the Red River Settlement, who, as we have seen, was a protégé of the governor.

The work is dedicated to the directors of the Hudson's Bay Company. These were nine in num-

ber, and their names are nearly all well known in connection with the trade of this period: Sir John Pelly, long famous for his leadership, Andrew Colville, deputy-governor, who by family connection with Lord Selkirk long held an important place, Benjamin Harrison, John Halkett, another kinsman of Lord Selkirk, H. H. Berens, A. Chapman, M.P., Edward Ellice, M.P., the Earl of Selkirk, the son of the founder, and R. Weynton. Most of these names will be found commemorated in forts and trading-posts throughout Rupert's Land.

Having made preparations for being absent from his important duties for a long period, Sir George Simpson started on his great tour, leaving London on March 3rd, 1841. The ship called at Halifax, but discharged its cargo at Boston, from which port Sir George went by land to Montreal, and started up the fur traders' route via the St. Lawrence and Ottawa rivers on May 4th. Soon Ste. Anne was reached by the canoe brigade. The editor of the work, who knew Montreal and its vicinity as well as the customs of the *voyageurs*, shows his sense of humour in referring to Moore's "Canadian Boat Song" by saying, "At Ste. Anne's rapid on the Ottawa we neither sang our evening hymn nor bribed the Lady Patroness with shirts, caps, etc., for a propitious journey, but proceeded."

Following the old canoe route, Georgian Bay and Lake Superior were soon passed over, though on the latter lake the expedition was delayed about a

week by the ice, and here too Sir George received the sad news of the unfortunate death of his kinsman, Thomas Simpson, who is well known for his Arctic explorations. Taking the route from Fort William by the Kaministiquia River, the travellers hastened through Rainy Lake and river and Lake of the Woods. In referring to Rainy River, Sir George speaks, in the somewhat inflated style of the editor, without the caution which every fur trader was directed to cultivate in making known the resources of the fur country. A decade afterwards, as we shall see, Mr. Roebuck, before the committee of the House of Commons, when Sir George was speaking of Rupert's Land as a barren land, quoted the somewhat fulsome passage.

Following the usual route by Winnipeg River, Lake Winnipeg, and Red River, Fort Garry was soon reached, and here the governor somewhat changed his plans. He determined to cross the prairies by light conveyances, and accordingly on July 3rd, at five in the morning, with his fellow-travellers, with only six men, three horses, and one light cart, the "Emperor of the Plains" left Fort Garry under a salute, and with the shouting of the spectators started on his journey to follow the winding Assiniboine River.

A thousand miles over the prairie in July is one of the most cheery and delightsome journeys that can be made. The prairie flowers abound, their colours have not yet taken on the full blaze of

yellow to be seen a month later, and the mosquitoes are not very troublesome. The weather, though somewhat warm, is very rarely oppressive on the plains, where a breeze may always be felt. This long journey the party made with reckless speed in three weeks; and arrived at Edmonton House to be received with the firing of guns by nine native chiefs of the Blackfoot, Piegan, Sarcee, and Blood Indians, dressed in their finest clothes and decorated with scalp-locks. "They implored me," says the governor, "to grant their horses might always be swift, that the buffalo might instantly abound, and that their wives might live long and look young."

Four days sufficed at Edmonton to provide the travellers with forty-five fresh horses. They speedily passed up the Saskatchewan River, meeting bands of hostile Sarcees, using supplies of pemmican, and soon caught their first view of the white peaks of the Rocky Mountains. Deep muskegs and dense jungles were often encountered, but all were overcome by the skill and energy of the expert fur trader Rowand, their guide. They advanced until surrounded by the sublime mountain scenery, which was sometimes obscured by the smoke from fires prevailing throughout this region, which was suffering from a great drouth. At length Colville, on the Columbia River, was reached, nearly one thousand miles from Edmonton, and this journey, much of it mountain travelling, had averaged forty miles a day. The party from Fort Garry had been travel-

ling constantly for six weeks and five days, and they had averaged eleven and a half hours a day in the saddle. The weather had been charming, with a cloudless sky, the winds were light, the nights cool, and the only thing to be lamented was the appearance of the travellers, who, with tattered garments and crownless hats, entered the fort.

Embarking below the Chaudière Falls of the Columbia, the company took boats worked by six oars each, and the water being high they were able to make one hundred, and even more, miles a day, in due course reaching Fort Vancouver. At Fort Vancouver Governor Simpson met Trader Douglas—afterwards Sir James Douglas. He accompanied the party, which now took horses and crossed country by a four days' journey to Fort Nisqually. Here, on the shore of Puget Sound, lay the ship *Beaver*, and embarking on her the party went on their journey to Sitka, the chief place in Alaska, where the governor exchanged dignified courtesies with the Russian governor Etholine, and enjoyed the hospitality of his "pretty and lady-like wife." In addition, Governor Simpson examined into the company's operations (the Hudson's Bay Company had obtained exclusive license of this sleepy Alaska for twenty years longer), and found the trade to be 10,000 fur seals, 1,000 sea otters, 12,000 beavers, 2,500 land otters—foxes and martens—and 20,000 sea-horse teeth.

The return journey was speedily made, the *Beaver*

calling, as she came down the coast, at Forts Stikine, Simpson, and McLaughlin. In due course Fort Vancouver was reached again.

November was now drawing to a close, when two barques dropped down the Columbia River, the one bound for England, and the other, the *Cowlitz*, destined to convey Sir George Simpson to California, the Sandwich Islands, and then to Sitka again. On the third of December the party embarked on the *Cowlitz* at Fort George. The boat was detained for three whole weeks ere the bar at the mouth of the Columbia could be passed, so fierce was the storm which prevailed. The gale abated, the bar was crossed, and Christmas was spent on board with the usual festivities, and with many a toast for absent friends. Down the coast the journey became pleasant, Drake's Bay, supposed to have been reached by that old navigator, was passed. After this the ship was becalmed, but in a few days more Yerba Buena, a small coast town of California, was reached, where there was a Hudson's Bay Company fort, which the governor desired to visit. This point was on the Bay of San Francisco, and the future great metropolis was soon visited. San Francisco numbered at the time two thousand five hundred people, and it seemed a most quiet and unattractive spot. Not being able to land any cargo without government authority, the *Cowlitz* was compelled to pass down the coast to Monterey, the seat of government, in order to make a

customs entry and to visit the Spanish governor, Alvarado.

At Monterey the governor met Francis Ermatinger, who, in the disguise of a Spanish caballero, had come overland to spy out the country and give Sir George a report upon it. On January 19th the party succeeded in leaving Monterey, whence after a stormy passage the vessel reached Santa Barbara. Having been received with the highest honours and having been entertained with every gaiety, Sir George and his party left Santa Barbara regretfully and sailed for the Sandwich Islands on January 26th, 1842. The voyage of two thousand three hundred miles from the Californian coast to Honolulu, the capital of the Sandwich Islands, was a new experience. The air was close and sultry; the albatross and other tropical birds accompanied the vessel, and the time was wiled away with books. On February 10th the tall summit of Mauna Kea, the great volcanic peak of Hawaii, was to be seen; and sailing past the islands, anchor was cast at the entrance of the harbour of Honolulu, where the *Cowlitz* was soon boarded by Mr. Pelly, the agent of the Hudson's Bay Company, and Mr. Allan, a Hudson's Bay Company's officer. They were now among homelike surroundings, for there was a considerable English colony in Honolulu.

Sir George Simpson found in Honolulu a town of nine thousand souls, and was comfortably housed in a former royal palace obtained for the occasion.

Sir George had his love of pomp gratified by the attentions of royalty, and was honoured by King Kamehameha II, who dined with him on board the *Cowlitz*. He was also introduced to the pretty Queen Kaluma, whose name, meaning "the rum," the greatest object of a Sandwich Islander's admiration, amused him. Meeting the premier and others the traveller gained a full knowledge of the state of matters in the Sandwich Islands.

Leaving the islands regretfully, Sir George and his party sailed directly for Sitka, and on the twenty-third day out, April 16th, saw New Archangel. Sir George had now spent more than a year on his travels—three-fourths of the time on the land and one-fourth on the ocean.

At Sitka the party was heartily welcomed by Governor Etholine. Leaving New Archangel Sir George passed down the coast to Stikine, where he found a dreadful tragedy had just been enacted in the death by shooting of John McLaughlin, jr., the young gentleman lately in charge of the Hudson's Bay Company's fort at that point. As this crime had been committed by drunken Indians the governor at once introduced strict regulations prohibiting the use of strong drink in the fur trade. Sir George then returned to Sitka. At this time, on account of the Russians retaining the old style in their time reckoning, the *Cowlitz* changed the date in her log from April 30th to April 18th. Impressed with the fact that Sitka was the dirtiest place he

ever was in Sir George Simpson, having made a treaty with Governor Etholine entirely abolishing the use of spirituous liquors, left the New World to sail westward on May 9th, new style.

The good vessel *Alexander*, Captain Kadnikoff, was now to convey Sir George and his party; and with the very kindest attentions of the "manly and generous" captain, the journey was made from Sitka, around the south coast of the peninsula of Kamchatka in Asia to Okhotsk, on the coast of Siberia, in forty-four days, though in former times the journey had taken three months.

At Okhotsk the company maintained a post. This was situated on a low point, so near the level of the sea that it was inundated when a southerly wind blew. Okhotsk is a village of eight hundred souls; not a tree and hardly a blade of grass is to be seen within miles of the town. The climate is intensely disagreeable. The governor, after accomplishing his errand at Okhotsk, made a bargain, in which he, of course, got the worst, with a local usurer named Jacob to take his party, in eighteen days' time, to Yakutsk, on the Lena, which river they were to ascend. After meeting many caravans and innumerable travellers, and passing through strange experiences the party arrived at Yakutsk to be received with distinction by the local governor Roodikoff, who entertained the travellers with every delicacy, including the strange beverage *kumiss*. Yakutsk proved to be

a town of five thousand inhabitants, more than half of them whites. It is the great centre of Eastern Siberia for the fur trade, and for ivory obtained from the tusks of the many extinct mammoths embedded in the river mud.

On July 18th Governor Simpson's party left Yakutsk by overland journey, to avoid the difficult navigation of the Lena, taking a *britzska* with five horses, and two *telegas* with three each. Arrived at Bestach the party embarked in a tolerably comfortable boat for the officers and a smaller one for the Cossacks and servants. These boats were towed by horses, and progress was very slow. The travellers suffered from mosquitoes, weariness, and loss of sleep, but the food was good.

On August 8th the tedious journey was ended, and at the landing-place carriages, sent by the governor of Irkutsk, met the party. The record states, "that at one stopping-place they breakfasted on eggs, cream, and strawberries, adding to these delicacies of the season in the centre of Asia a little of our pemmican, from the heart of North America —such a picnic between the two continents as neither of them had ever seen before."

At Irkutsk a most hospitable reception met Sir George Simpson. The local governor, M. Patneffsky, provided him with a handsome carriage and four grays, and General Rupert, governor-general of Eastern Siberia, who lived at this point, gave him messages from the Czar. He also met the arch-

bishop of Eastern Siberia, whose hand Sir George cordially shook, when the prelate presented it to be kissed, the hearty governor not being aware of the *gaucherie* he had committed.

Sir George's stay at Irkutsk was the occasion of overflowing hospitality. "Though everything was magnificent," Sir George says, "Siberian entertainments, however, are not without their little drawbacks. Before dinner all the guests drink schnaps out of the same glass, eat caviare and herring with the same fork, and help themselves to preserves with the same spoon; and during dinner changes of knives and forks are unknown." Though Irkutsk had about twenty thousand people it seemed to be in a state of dilapidation and decay.

Leaving Irkutsk on August 15th the overland journey to Tobolsk, the famous stronghold of the Cossacks, was made in twenty days, and the fine old city, famous as the seat of the chivalrous invader Yermac, was entered just as the sun was rising. So rapid had been the governor's journey that they outstripped the courier who had gone ahead of them. Tobolsk is the centre to which the convicts from Russia are sent. The stay of the party at the city was short, and a rush was made to Tiumen, the most ancient settlement of Siberia. At this place of ten thousand souls the travellers were entertained in a thoroughly royal manner by the mayor of the town.

The overland journey through the province of

Perm was uneventful. On September 17th Novgorod was reached. Here two or three hundred thousand people from all parts of Europe and Asia congregate at the most important fair in the world. Hoping soon to reach the western limit of Russia the travellers pushed with great speed through Moscow and on to St. Petersburg. The distance from Okhotsk to St. Petersburg, including stoppages, had occupied ninety-one days, during which time the party had traversed about seven thousand miles.

Thirteen days after leaving St. Petersburg Sir George reached London, "having," as he says in his narrative, "with the exception of the proposed trip to Kiachta, accomplished my journey round the world as originally contemplated, the whole being completed within the space of nineteen months and twenty-six days."

CHAPTER VI

IN HIS LETTERS

PROBABLY no man shows his real thoughts in any way more readily than in his correspondence with his friends. Governor Simpson was an excellent correspondent, and kept the whole of his wide-spread command in hand by letters written promptly and frequently. He had the knack of dealing succinctly and clearly with business matters and then drifting off into a page of what he calls "chit-chat," which was very interesting and was eagerly looked for by his correspondents.

We are to be congratulated in our study of his life that the versatile governor wrote so many letters. In a garret in Queen Street, Edinburgh, the letters and papers of the late James Hargrave, chief factor of the company and for many years master of York Factory, were stored by his son with trusty solicitors. York Factory was for many years the *entrepôt* of all the goods for Rupert's Land, and the place of export for the furs gathered from the Arctic solitudes. Hargrave's correspondence accordingly embraced communications from all parts of the fur traders' territory and from almost all men of prominence in the far West.

Large packages of Governor Simpson's letters

were docketed and left in perfect order by Chief Factor Hargrave, who, upon retiring, treasured these memorials of the past. The writer, through the kindness of their custodian, from the many hundreds of these letters, selected some thirty written during the interesting portion of Governor Simpson's life, beginning with 1830 and including a number of years following.

The governor had at this time been ten years at the helm of the company's affairs, had become acquainted with the work and with the thousands of men under him. He was certainly master of the situation. In a letter from Norway House in June, 1830, the governor writes that a change has taken place in his condition, meaning that he had just been married. Mrs. Simpson had accompanied him to Norway House and he writes that she is to accompany him to York. His wife was a sister of the wife of Chief Factor Finlayson, and on this account Red River Settlement was the governor's residence for several years after his marriage. With the zeal of a Benedict, he writes that Leblanc—a faithful and expert workman—is to be ready to leave York Factory with him and return to Red River Settlement to arrange a house for the wintering of himself and his bride, and he gives orders to his faithful man at York Factory to have his quarters on the bay in good order for his arrival.

In the same letter, however, in which he speaks of his new found felicity, a social shadow falls

across the view. He mentions that a leading factor has been married, and has gone to Moose Factory. He says to Hargrave, "Pray soothe his woman by any argument you can think of, and say she will not be deserted." The meaning simply is that the officer had been married—*mariage du pays*—to a native, and that when he legally married, he pensioned off the woman or had her married to some one else. This bad practice was only too common in certain quarters in the fur country.

Governor Simpson was a strong and sympathetic friend. In a letter dated Red River Settlement, December, 1831, he speaks very feelingly of the death of his friend Mr. Richardson—John Richardson, of the firm of Forsyth, Richardson & Co.—of Montreal. His friend had been a prominent man in the fur trade. The governor speaks of him as "a gentleman of the first standing and character in Canada," and refers to the kindness and attention which he had shown him.

Living happily in the settlement he says, "here we are very happy and gay, but the weather has been very changeable." He mentions the McKenzies and McMillans, leading fur-trading people, the Rev. Mr. and Mrs. Jones, the pioneer clergyman and his wife, of whom Governor Simpson was fond, Dr. Tod, an eccentric trader, and Dr. Hambly, the physician, "the strangest compound of skill, simplicity, selfishness, extravagance, musical taste and want of courtesy I ever fell in with." . . . "The

people are living on the fat of the earth; in short, Red River is a perfect land of Canaan as far as good cheer goes." The governor was plainly happy in the midst of his new-found domestic joys.

In all the governor's letters there is a shrewdness and adroitness that is very marked. He is, indeed, somewhat given to flattery. The great object of every clerk in the service was to rise to the position of a commissioned officer. The governor, in March, 1832, informs Hargrave that he has prophesied at one of the annual gatherings that Hargrave would be among the first to be promoted. He writes, "You are a prodigious favourite with your *bourgeois*." He states, however, that the suggestion to make him chief trader had been opposed in the council. The governor promises that it will not be long delayed, and promotion came, as we have seen, in the following year.

The governor's interest in the people is well shown in a letter written in December, 1832. The crops in the Red River Settlement had been very poor that season, owing to an unusually wet summer and very "unseasonable frosts in the early part of the autumn." He hopes the people may, however, have enough to eat. "You will be sorry to learn," he says, "that Mrs. Simpson continues in very delicate health. She joins in regards to you."

In 1833 the governor himself was exceedingly unwell at Red River Settlement, and he writes

that the traders McMillan and Christie advise him to make a trip to Canada and England. Mrs. Simpson also continued in a very poor state of health. He comforts Hargrave by telling him that he hopes to send him a commission from the next meeting of partners in June at Norway House. In the same year there was a great scarcity of the necessaries of life throughout the country; especially was there a great dearth of pemmican and grease. Turning suddenly from an expression of his sympathy for the people, the governor writes, "Sir Walter Scott is no more; our universally admired and respected fellow-countryman is gone."

An example of the governor's firmness and skill in administering reproof is seen in a letter written from the Red River Settlement in December, 1833. Referring to some unpleasantness between Hargrave and one of his fellow-traders, the writer states that no doubt his correspondent will be happy and comfortable now that the source of the discord is removed. Then he goes on to tell of all the craft (boats) of Red River shopkeepers being stopped in the ice on their way to England from York Factory. The crews of Logan's and Sinclair's had managed to reach Norway House. McDermot's people had not in December been heard from. He then states that the "trippers" blamed Hargrave for delaying them so long at York. The governor says, however, that he and Mr. Christie upheld his officer at the Factory; but privately he states his

fear that Hargrave in his anxiety to dispatch the *Prince George*, the company's ship, on her journey through Hudson Bay to England, had delayed the brigades five or six days.

In the same letter Governor Simpson shows the part he took in religious affairs. The missionaries of the Church of England thus far held the whole ground among the Highland settlers of Red River. The people were somewhat irritated. While the governor sympathized to a certain extent with his fellow-countrymen in their desires, yet he feared dissension, and preferred matters to remain in their existing condition. He says, "have got into the new church (St. John's), which is really a splendid edifice for the Red River people." He says they are now less clamorous about a Gaelic minister. He likewise has a fling at his complaining fellow-countrymen, saying that they had wished to have their private stills, and now "about whiskey they say not one word, that rum is so cheap, and good strong 'heavy-wet' in general use."

Among his chit-chat in May, 1835, he speaks of a promising Scottish officer having gone through his work manfully and being an efficient officer, "which is a feather in his cap." Ballenden afterwards became master of Fort Garry.

In the year 1836 there are many letters. The governor was on the eve of going to England, and after the council at Norway House writes a letter every other day to Hargrave. In most generous

terms he instructs Hargrave to be attentive to Captain Carey and his family. The captain was the new head of the company's experimental farm at Red River Settlement. Extra allowances were to be made for the newcomers, and for three officers at Red River Settlement, as well as greater liberality to be shown to all the gentlemen and clerks.

In another letter of the same month the governor urges that the several brigades should be got off as early as possible, in order that they might all reach their destinations before the setting in of the ice. They were to leave in the following order: Saskatchewan, Columbia, Lac la Pluie (Rainy Lake), Sinclair, and McKenzie (Red River).

The governor has been charged with conniving to degrade the Indians and to prevent the whites obtaining their rights. One evil, however, he continued strongly to oppose, that was the use of strong drink, at least in any general way. We have already seen how on the Pacific coast he entered into a compact with the Russian governor to completely do away with strong drink among the Indians of the coast.

Writing July 6th from Norway House, he says to Hargrave: "Has the allowance of wine regulated by fixed system succeeded at York? I do not at all see that it is necessary to introduce evening brandy-and-water parties for the convenience of the captains. On the contrary I should be glad that it was broken off; let them take their 'whack' at the

dinner table, like other people. When spoken to in England about heavy drinking on shipboard, they said in their defence that it is the custom of the service at the Factories."

In this letter the governor's love for curiosities and display may be seen. He instructs Hargrave to send to him at London the calumet (red pipe) to be handed to him by Trader Ross; also a pair of leather shoes and Indian scalps. He wishes to have the trader send him stuffed birds, well made snowshoes, or anything else curious at the Factories. These objects he showed with great pleasure to the numerous friends whom he gathered around him in the world's metropolis.

Sometimes the governor held a very strong opinion, favourable or otherwise, of certain of his subordinates. Of John Tod, an irrepressible fellow-countryman of his own, he had no good opinion. In 1823 an historian has described with great liveliness Governor Simpson summoning Tod and in bland terms telling him the council had been pleased to send him to New Caledonia, which it is well known was regarded as the Siberia of the fur-traders. The imperturbable doctor was highly pleased and said to the governor that that was the place where he most wished to go. In a letter of 1836 to Hargrave occurs the following: "John Tod has been a most useless and troublesome man of late. He goes home with his wife this summer. He requires more luxury and attention, I understand, than

any governor of Rupert's Land would be indulged with; let him have all that is fit and proper, but not an iota more."

On the other hand the letter says: "If anything seems to you that may be useful to Finlayson at Ungava let it be forwarded. He will have no further supplies till autumn 1838, and perhaps not then. It has been decided to send another man to Ungava."

An interesting group of letters lies before me dated June, 1849. One of these is a letter from Sir George Simpson to Hargrave at York Factory. It is written from Norway House. With it is a letter, or copy of a letter, from Hargrave to Sir George and within this a list of names. The correspondence shows the inner history of how the appointments to high offices were made in Sir George's time. Hargrave had now become a chief factor. He is asked to select such men as he may regard most fit in the company's service for appointment to commissions at the meeting of the following year. This was presumably done by every officer, and then from the lists suggested the appointments were made.

Hargrave suggested two names for chief factor. These were John Rae, the Arctic explorer, and William Sinclair, an old and respected trader. By contemporary lists we find that these two were appointed, and were the only ones appointed to the chief factorship in 1850, showing how much Har-

grave's opinion was valued. He suggested the names of six clerks for the chief traderships.

In the year 1849 the first bishop of Rupert's Land, Bishop Anderson, was appointed, and came out from England in a company's ship by way of York Factory, and thence to Fort Garry. It is amusing to find in the postscript to this letter the evidence that Sir George desired to have his kingdom in proper order for the inspection of the prelate. He says to Hargrave: "I shall be up here, God willing, about June 10th next. Pray take care that there be no drunken scenes at York at any time, more especially when the bishop passes or during the visits of missionaries or strangers, and do not let brigades start on Sundays."

CHAPTER VII

BEFORE THE IMPERIAL PARLIAMENT

THE important fact is to be borne in mind that the Hudson's Bay Company's charter covered only Rupert's Land, i.e., the territory whose waters flow into Hudson Bay. That left the Arctic slope and the Pacific slope, with Vancouver Island, outside their control. For this vast excluded portion of north-west British America the company held permission to trade secured from the imperial parliament. The license was given for twenty-one years. Twice during Governor Simpson's rule this license came up for renewal. The disturbed state of Canada in 1838 led to this being secured by the company with little opposition or criticism.

But in the interval between 1838 and 1859 there had been a complete change. In Red River Settlement itself great unrest had prevailed from 1847 onward. The attention of Canada, now pacified and prosperous, had also been drawn to the fertile plains of the North-West. Accordingly a determined opposition to the granting of the license arose, and embodied itself in the appointment of a powerful committee of the imperial House of Commons which met in 1857.

This committee became famous. The whole

economy of the Hudson's Bay Company was discussed. The committee held eighteen meetings, examined at length twenty-nine witnesses, and thoroughly sifted the evidence. The *personnel* of the committee was brilliant. The Hon. Henry Labouchere, secretary of state, was chairman. Mr. Roebuck and Mr. Gladstone were inquiring and aggressive; Lord Stanley and Earl Russell gave due attention to the proceedings; and Edward Ellice, the old peacemaker of the companies, was combined witness and advocate for the company. Old explorers and pioneers such as John Ross, Dr. Rae, Colonel Lefroy, Sir John Richardson, Colonel Crofton, Bishop Anderson, Colonel Caldwell, and Dr. King gave information.

From time to time, beginning in February and ending in July, the committee met and gathered a vast mass of evidence, making four hundred folio pages of printed matter. It is a storehouse of valuable material about the Hudson's Bay Company. As was proper and necessary, Sir George Simpson was summoned and gave important evidence. He was asked fourteen hundred and twenty-three questions, and his testimony covers forty-four pages of the voluminous report. Sir George was certainly subjected to a severe attack by Mr. Gladstone, Mr. Roebuck, and Mr. Grogan. To say that he came through the ordeal without a scratch would not be true. He was followed with a determined persistence, and his defence of the great monopoly

was only partially successful. He found out the full meaning of Job's desire that his adversary had written a book, for the "Journey Round the World" was his hardest task to defend. With to-day's knowledge of the golden wheatfields of Manitoba, it seems hard to understand his evidence, though it must be said that the large sums of money sunk by the Hudson's Bay Company in its fruitless endeavours to advance agriculture in the Red River Settlement may have influenced his pessimistic testimony as to the capabilities of the country.

While obtaining this enormous mass of evidence, every phase of Rupert's Land was brought out, and incidentally the main features of the thirty-seven years in which Governor Simpson had held sway. The theory of the aggressive element of the committee was that many parts of Rupert's Land, especially the Red River Settlement, were suitable for settlement, and their contention implied that it was simply greed and selfishness that led to the Hudson's Bay Company holding so firmly to its monopoly.

One line of investigation followed was to show that the company had a monopoly and exercised it. It was maintained that the people of Red River Settlement were desirous of exporting their surplus products, and the changes were rung and the case was cited of William Sinclair and Andrew McDermot, leading merchants, who had been refused

transport in their export of tallow. Sir George strenuously maintained that this was simply because the ship accommodation was not sufficient, and that part of the company's goods as well had to be left behind. It came out, however, that Sinclair was suspected of fur-trading, a point on which the company always held a strong position. Much was made of the fact that there was no market for more than a paltry eight thousand bushels of wheat, which were taken by the company. To this Sir George's repeated answer was that the company could not obtain all the wheat supply required, and had at times even to import breadstuffs for its own use.

Efforts were also made to prove that the Hudson's Bay Company did not wish settlers to take up the land, that they would only give a lease, and that obstacles were thrown in the way of settlement. In answering this charge Sir George was probably successful. He reiterated that they had no power to prevent squatters taking their lands, and that the majority of the settlers were squatters, not one of whom had been dislodged from his holding.

It was pointed out that in 1844 a form of deed with tyrannical provisions was introduced, but it was replied that it had been little used. The form of deed required four things of the settler: (1) That he would not deal in furs; (2) That he would neither distribute nor import spirituous liquors; (3) That he would resist a foreign invasion; (4) That

he would promote the religious institutions of the settlement. Pressed for a satisfactory explanation Sir George maintained that the council of Assiniboia had exceeded its powers in this matter.

As to the charge that a regulation had been adopted by which letters would not be sent out from the Fort Garry post-office for those who had been suspected of participation in the fur trade, Sir George denied any knowledge of the matter, although from the noise made about the affair it is hard to believe the governor could have failed to hear of it.

The battle royal was fought, however, on the capacities of the country to support a large population. Sir George on this point took a surprisingly firm, and even defiant attitude. Categorically asked whether a province could not be laid out which would give a livelihood to a large body of settlers, Sir George with decision replied: "I do not think settlers would go to the Red River from the United States or anywhere else for the purpose of settlement."

It was with delicious irony that his tormentor then read to Sir George the description from his own "Journey Round the World" of the country lying between Red River and the Rocky Mountains: "Beautiful country, lofty hills, long valley, sylvan lakes, bright green, uninterrupted profusion of roses and bluebells, softest vales, panorama of hanging copses," and asked him if he had changed

his mind. The only reply made by the governor was, "Yes, there were a great many flowering shrubs."

At another time Sir George was maintaining that the country could not support a population on account of the "poverty of the soil," that in the district spoken of the earth was frozen the year round, that any time in summer "frozen earth" could be reached by digging a foot and a half into the soil; then he maintained that the want of fuel would make settlement impossible, that the locusts would devour every green thing, and that floods were so prevalent that settlers would be driven out. "I have myself," said the governor, "paddled over the roofs of some of the houses in my canoe."

With a scathing tone his tormentor again read from the fatal book, speaking of Rainy River: "Nor are the banks less favourable to agriculture than the waters themselves to navigation, resembling in some measure those of the Thames near Richmond. From the very brink of the river there rises a gentle slope of green sward, crowned in many places with a plentiful growth of birch, poplar, beech, elm, and oak. Is it too much for the eye of philanthropy to discern, through the vista of futurity, this noble stream, connecting as it does the fertile shores of two spacious lakes, with crowded steamboats on its bosom and populous towns on its borders?"

Sir George could not extricate himself, but it is only fair that we should remember that his versatile

editor, Recorder Thom, had made up his book, and it was no doubt the eloquence and imagination of the editor which was responsible for these highly-coloured and poetic flights. The intensity of the situation was all the greater, because Sir George could not disown the book or make known its history.

Sir George's testimony as regards the difficulties attending the practice of agriculture might be summed up in the expression which he used in regard to the approach to the country through British soil, namely: "That the difficulties were insuperable unless the Bank of England were expended on it." But his answer as to the treatment of the Indians by the company, the degree of law and order maintained by the company, and the general encouragement given to the missionaries in their religious and educational work, was on the whole very satisfactory.

Whatever criticisms may have been made as to the Indians he was able to show that a benevolent and just policy had always been employed towards them. The charges as to starvation of the natives on the shores of Labrador were not fastened on the company; and it was made clear that there was no title a North-West Indian was prouder to carry than that of an employé or customer of the Hudson's Bay Company.

Sir George was able to show that in many cases missionaries had been given free passage to the

country in the company's ships and boats, that a considerable sum of money was spent annually in chaplaincies, and in supporting schools, while nothing more was taken from the pockets of the people than a four per cent. tariff on imports, which tax bore also upon the company, while life and property were surprisingly safe. Much to the astonishment of his questioners, Sir George was able to point to the fact that only nineteen capital crimes had been committed over the whole vast territory during the thirty-seven years of his governorship. This was all the more remarkable as the small population of only eight thousand souls in Red River Settlement made it difficult to carry on government, and to this was added a certain restlessness which the governor described as "arising from the love of mischief-making on the part of some of our *second rate half-gentry*."

Thanks to this inquiry many things were made plain: the whole financial system, the plan of management, the appointment of officers, the simple state of society in Red River Settlement, and the provision for the support of religious institutions arising from the Leith bequest and the gift of the company.

The committee did its work well, and was compelled to decide in opposition to the governor's contentions. Those who have lived to see Rupert's Land at the beginning of the twentieth century, and have passed by its vast wheatfields and com-

fortable homes, will realize how far astray he was, and at the same time reflect on how utterly untrustworthy may be our honest judgments.

The committee, whose valuable report was cordially adopted by the House of Commons, recommended that it is "important to meet the just and reasonable wishes of Canada to assume such territory as may be useful for settlement; that the districts of the Red River and the Saskatchewan seem the most available; and that for the order and good government of the country arrangements should be made for their cession to Canada." It was also agreed that those regions where settlement was impossible should be left to the exclusive control of the Hudson's Bay Company for the fur trade.

The committee recommended that Vancouver Island should be made independent of the company, and also that the mainland territory of British Columbia should be united with the island.

Some three or four years after the eventful sittings of this committee, and while the old régime still held sway, the veteran emperor of the traders died. He had been much excited over the visit of the Prince of Wales to Canada. This over, he had proceeded on his trip to Red River as usual. It is said that he reached Sault Ste. Marie, but was too ill to proceed farther. He returned to Lachine, and there, after a short illness at his home, passed away in 1860.

Though such writers as McLean, who had been

in the company's service and had a grievance, do not hesitate to say that his "was an authority combining the despotism of military rule with the strict surveillance and mean parsimony of the avaricious trader," in summing up his life the writer may say: Governor Simpson lifted the fur trade out of the depth into which it had fallen, harmonized the hostile elements of the two companies and made them one brotherhood, reduced order out of chaos in the interior, helped various expeditions for the exploration of Rupert's Land, and on the whole was a beneficent ruler. His management of the financial concerns of the Hudson's Bay Company was such as to gain him the approbation of his own country and of the whole financial world.

CHAPTER VIII

CANADA'S DEBT TO THE FUR COMPANIES

THE infant life of Canada was nourished by the fur traders. The new impulse given to France in the last year of the sixteenth century by Chauvin's charter to trade for furs held within it untold possibilities for the development of Canada. French gentlemen and soldiers came forth to the New World seeking excitement in the western wilds, and hoping also to mend their broken fortunes. There were scores of such at Quebec and Montreal, but especially at Three Rivers on the St. Lawrence. Nicolet led the way to the fur country; Joliet gave up the church for furs; Duluth was a free-booter, and the charge against him was that he systematically broke the king's ordinance as to the fur trade; La Salle sent the first vessel—the *Griffin*—laden with furs down the lakes, where she was lost; the iron-handed Tonty deserted the whites and threw in his lot with the Indians as a fur trafficker; and La Veréndrye, one of the greatest of the early Frenchmen charged with making great wealth by the fur trade, says in his heart-broken reply to his persecutors: "If more than 40,000 livres of debt which I have on my shoulders are an advantage, then I can flatter myself that I am very rich."

Shortly after French Canada became British, it was seen that so lucrative a traffic as that in pelts should not be given up. Curry, Finlay and Henry, sen., pluckily pushed their way beyond Lake Superior in search of wealth, and found it. The Montreal merchants made the trade up the lakes the foundation of Montreal's commercial supremacy in Canada; and the North-West Company, which they founded, only did what the great English company had been doing with their motto, "*Pro pelle cutem*" for a hundred years on the shores of Hudson Bay.

It is evident to the most casual observer that the fur trade was an important element in the building up of Canada, not only in wealth but also in some of our higher national characteristics. The *coureurs de bois* and the canoemen stood for much in the days of our infancy as a new nation.

While we delight to see the sonorous Indian words chosen as the names for our New World rivers and lakes, counties and towns, yet we rejoice too that our pioneers are thus commemorated. The names of all the French pioneers mentioned are to be found fastened on the region which they explored. Fraser, Thompson, Stuart, Quesnel, Douglas, Finlayson, and Dease have retained their hold even in the face of such musical terms as Chipewyan, Metlakahtla, Assiniboine, and Muskegon. Winnipegosis and Manitoba forts have borne the names of our three traders,

Mackenzie, Lord Selkirk, and Simpson, and Fort Alexandria also commemorates the first of these. Rivers and islands, counties, towns, mountains and vast regions of territory are all known by the names of the trio whose fortunes we have been following.

The great explorer leads the way for the development of his country, stimulates inquiry as to the resources of the land he finds, and awakens the desire in other breasts to follow if not excel him in his discoveries. The map maker, the mineral prospector, the lumberer, and the tourist are all dependent on him as their guide. What Columbus is to the New World as a whole, the explorer is to the special field he discovers, and his fame, if not so great, must yet be akin to that of the man who ploughed the first furrow across the Atlantic.

The fur trader is also the pioneer of settlement. It is quite true that there is an antagonism between the fur trader and the settler. The fur trader seeks to keep the beaver, the mink, and the fox alive that he may take toll of them year after year ; when the settler comes the beaver dam is a thing of the past, and the fox flees far away to his forest lair. Yet inasmuch as the settler is permanent, and the trader transient, the meeting of the two has the inevitable result of driving off the trader. This cannot be helped, it is the trader's misfortune ; he must find "fresh woods and pastures new," and then when

his fur-trading days are done he must resort to the life of the settler and spend the sunset of his days in village or clearance.

It was the old Hudson's Bay Company led by Lord Selkirk that introduced the Highland settlers on Red River, and decreed that Fort Garry should be the centre around which gathered the Red River Settlement, which in time became the city of Winnipeg. Fort Victoria on Vancouver Island, chosen by Trader James Douglas as the dépôt of the fur trade, has become the capital of British Columbia and the gem of the Pacific coast. All over Rupert's Land the places chosen by the fur traders have become the centres where has grown up the trade of to-day. Portage la Prairie was a fort, so was Brandon, so was Qu'Appelle, so was Edmonton, so was Fort William, and many others. In hundreds of cities on the American continent the old fur traders' fort was the first post driven down to mark the establishment of the commerce of the future day.

Sir George Simpson fought a losing battle when he sought to keep a Chinese wall round his fur preserve. It was impossible to maintain this splendid isolation. Prejudice, misrepresentation, charter rights, and rocky barriers could not stop the inevitable movement. The sleepy fur trader in his dream hears approaching the sound of the bee—"a more adventurous colonist than man"—and mutters in his sleep:—

"I listen long
To his domestic hum, and I think I hear
The sound of that advancing multitude
Which soon shall fill these deserts."

It must be so!

No country was ever in the position to need the fur trade in its early history as much as old Canada. Early Canada was covered with heavy forests. The St. Lawrence, its chief artery, was difficult to navigate. Its first colonists were all poor—fleeing away from the despotic persecution of victorious American revolutionists, leaving everything behind them, or crossing the Atlantic because of hard financial conditions in the motherland. Moreover, Canada is northern and nature is not so prolific as she is further south. Hence long years elapsed before poverty was driven out, and peaceful plenty came.

Now the northerly situation of Canada was very favourable for the production of fur-bearing animals. Furs are very valuable, and are so light and may be contained in such small space that the trapper may carry a fortune in one single pack upon his back. This made trade possible over thousands of miles to the interior, through the agency of the birch-bark canoe, which the redman so valued as to call it the gift of the *manitou*. So while fifty years were passing in Little York (Toronto), the capital of Upper Canada, with the most painful and slow steps of improvement, Montreal was the mart of a most valuable trade. The fur-trading merchants became

nabobs. Forsyth, Richardson, McTavish, Frobisher and many others became wealthy, bought seigniories, became prominent figures in public life, were looked up to as their natural leaders by their French-Canadian *voyageurs*, and retired from business to live in their palatial abodes—the "lords of the north"—or to retire as did Sir Alexander Mackenzie and others to the motherland and spend their remaining days as country gentlemen.

The same thing has continued from the earliest days till now. Not only can a man of fair education, who rises with reasonable rapidity in his forty years or more of service for the company, have at the end of his time say from six to eight thousand pounds sterling, but clerks, post-masters, and labouring-men may all leave the service with proportionate savings. True the life may be long, hard, and unattractive, but expenses are small and savings large. The Red River Settlement grew to twelve thousand people in 1870, five-sixths of its people having come through the channel of the fur trade.

No doubt in the present condition of Canada the fur trade does not occupy so important a place. The farmer tends to overtake the hunter in fortune, just as the settler must in time drive out the trader. But the very greatest service was rendered the country by the fur traders in early Canada supplying a class of capitalists who spent their money in giving employment to others, organized first lines of transport by boat, filled the sea with their sailing vessels to carry

freight and passengers, and afterwards introduced steamships to thread the rivers, cross the lakes and even the Atlantic Ocean.

Montreal became a centre for wholesale trade. Goods could be supplied to the settlers in Western Canada; then when transport of a better kind was needed, the capital and energy of Montreal merchants became the basis for building lines of railway, and for giving the farmer with his products access to the great markets of the world. The chain of connection is complete in Canada between the fur trader's pioneer work and the present state of Canadian trade and commerce.

The fur trade was also a school for the development of such high moral qualities as courage and tact. In no other circumstances does so much depend upon the personal qualities of the man. The fur trade is carried on in the solitudes, far from organized society. The dealings are with savages who are kept down by no visible authority, who are ignorant and may be appealed to by greed, jealousy, or superstition to turn against the trader and injure him. Thus it was often dangerous to go far from the base of supplies and venture almost single-handed among untutored tribes.

The experiences of the fur companies in such circumstances have been very remarkable. At first there may have been violence done by the natives to the traders. The brothers Frobisher on their first visits to Rainy Lake were robbed, the ship *Ton-*

quin on the Pacific coast was attacked and many employés killed, massacres of the traders took place at Fort St. John and Kamloops in British Columbia, and Chief Factor Campbell was attacked in his occupation of the head waters of the Stikine and on the Upper Yukon. Yet it is marvellous that for more than two centuries, or including the French régime, three centuries, the traders have freely mingled with the savage tribes and have been objects of envy from their possession of valuable goods, but have succeeded by sturdiness and good management in getting control of the wildest Indians.

Now this was chiefly accomplished by the good character of the traders. The men of the Hudson's Bay Company especially, but to a certain extent also all the fur traders of British America have been men of probity and fairness. Just and honest treatment of an Indian makes him your friend. The terrible scenes of bloodshed enacted by the Indians among the Americans in the Western States can, in almost every instance, be traced to dishonesty and wrong on the part of the traders and Indian agents of that country. British fur companies have been, on the whole, dominated by a wise desire to retain the confidence of the Indian, and have proved the statement true that Britain alone has shown an ability to deal justly with and to gain the confidence of inferior races.

In reaching this end great determination, watch-

fulness, and caution are developed in the trader. He must be firm, must never let an Indian imagine he can master him, and many a time must be ready to use the "knock-down" argument in the case of the impudent or the intractable. Physically and mentally the successful trader requires to be a man among men. Thus the fur trade has cultivated a manliness, straightforwardness, and decision of character which has proved a heritage of greatest value to the Canadian people.

Wherever the Hudson's Bay Company fort is established there flies the Union Jack. On Sundays and holidays it was always unfurled, and the lesson that there was something higher than trade was thereby taught, for on those days traffic ceased. The companies were always on the side of law and order. The loyal sentiment was their only way of governing the Indians, and it became a part of their settled policy to "honour the king." In the War of the Revolution the traders along the frontier were true to Britain, and the celebrated capture of Michilimackinac in 1812 was accomplished by a British force of less than two hundred men—one hundred and sixty of them Nor'-Wester *voyageurs* under Captain Roberts. In the struggle of the Canadian rebellion we have seen that from Governor Simpson down all the fur traders were against rebellion and in favour of law.

Undoubtedly hand-in-hand with the United Empire Loyalists, the Nor'-Wester influence did much

to keep Canada true to British institutions, while the presence of the Hudson's Bay Company and the Selkirk colony in Rupert's Land, and the traders led by Chief Factor James Douglas on the coast, were the means of preserving to the British Crown the greater Canada which was an object of desire for half a century to the Americans. The traders did their full share in maintaining and perpetuating the loyalty which to-day is so strong a sentiment in the breasts of Canadians.

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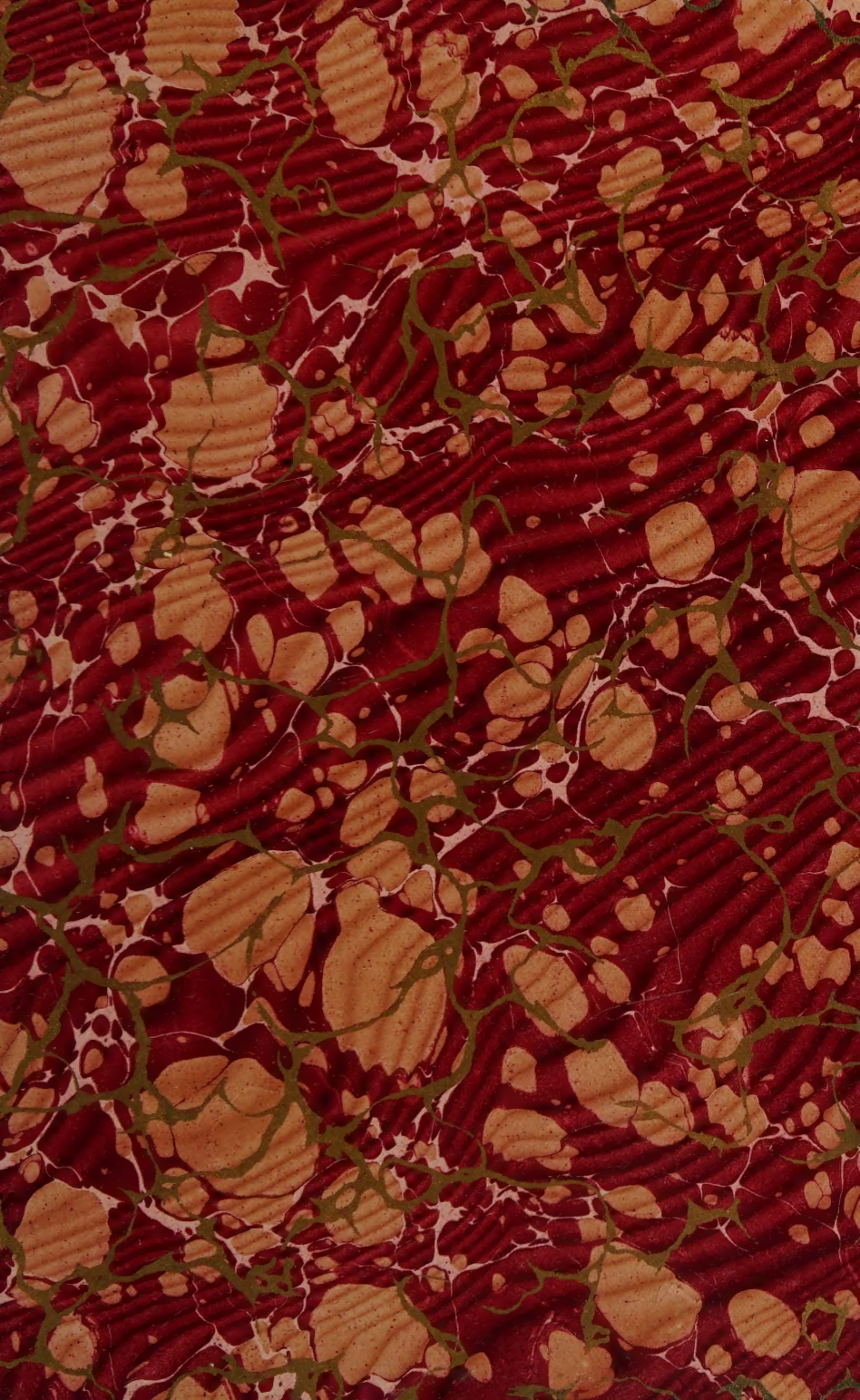
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